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Attributes Differentiating Monopoly in Travel Service: Starline Paribahan Vs. Other Passenger Services

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Abstract

Satisfied customers have a higher price tolerance for their preference and had less attraction for switching to competitors in transport sector. However, passenger satisfaction of selected transport particularly Starline Paribahan Limited-one of the transport providers in Feni town, Bangladesh, arouses emotion to the extent that induces monopoly business. It is supposed to be based on feeling or extreme degree of pleasure or contentment of the passengers travelling through. The exact happening and to make out the critical factors differentiating the choice of the passengers between Starline Paribahan Limited and other passenger transport service providers are the prime concern of this study. With the light of the technicalities affected through psychological and other common characteristics, the author aims to identify the set discrimination function based on the random selection of passengers which is in total 200 in numbers with a semi-structured questionnaire based on frequent travelling in this selected region by using the tools-SPSS 22.0 with the help of Discriminant Analysis. The discriminant function revealed significant association between groups and all predictors, accounting for 69.72% of between-group variability although the closer outlook under structure Matrix shown only four predictors, namely quality service (0.820), one stop service (0.515), brand belief (0.465), waiting time (0.460) with price (0.275) and income (0.193) as poor predictors. The cross-validated classification showed that overall 87.5% cases were correctly classified. The generalization of those attributes might become convincing and favorable elements of passengers' choice factors in future passenger travelling.

Keywords: Choice of Passengers, Transport, Brand Belief, One Stop Service, Waiting Time

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Introduction

The transport system especially road infrastructure of Bangladesh, one of the significant role players in transporting both passengers and freight, is the most likely investment option along with its inherent advantage to provide point to point service carrying over 80% to 88% as per the Bangladesh National Conservation Strategy, 2016 (Hoque, 2016). Again, quality of road score as per the infrastructure score report of Bangladesh was 2.9 particularly on roads according to the Global Competitiveness Report of the year 2014-15 of World Economic Forum. However the general quality of transport services at all levels and by all modes have been poor along with unreliable service operations and safety and security issues (Mahmud, Rahman, and Hasanat-E- Rabbi, 2012; Abdin, 2018).

Discomfort, time of travel and risk are considerable factor for transport prices though changes in price affected through location decisions, vehicle type, type of service selected, frequency of (Litman, 2013). But, service quality is addressed with expectation and perceptions of service (Markovic et.al., 2018; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1985) whereas the monetary price and the nonmonetary price particularly on time, search, and psychological costs would be considered under perceived price (Zeithaml, 1988; Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal, 1991). The earlier resulting statistics of May, Grant-Muller, Marsden, and Thanos (2008) tend to overlook or undercount off-peak travel, short trips, poor people's travel, children's travel, and non-motorized travel under the dimension of quality service in survey.

Rystam (1998) suggested counting hard standard factors like travelling time, fare etc. and soft standard factors like comfort, information etc; the objective factors for transport services like gender, age, and trips related factors especially purpose and subjective factors like valuations of the alternative's characteristics, attitudes and lifestyle. These factors are based on the individual's perceptions and are often more difficult to quantify. Finally, the transport related attributes that better describe the travel standard are timetable, comfort and service factors, and quality satisfaction and safety (Kottenhoff, 1999; Kristoffersson, & Engelson, 2018) and also without disturbance (Van Oort, 2016)

Literature Review

Customer satisfaction is treated as one of the most frequently used indicators to measure the success of a marketing strategy (Flavian, Martinez, and Polo, 2001; Payangan, & Munir, 2018).). More specifically, customer loyalty is the degree to which the customer has exhibited repurchasing behavior of a particular company service and the significance of expenditure on that particular type of service (Hellier, 2003; Bazilinskyy et.al; 2018). Service companies particularly on transport, the brand/company needs to match resources to the demand by evaluating relationships between the nature of demand, the capacity requirement and related risk measures on the basis of multiple influencing factors and internal capabilities (Heskett, Sasser & Hart, 1990), even in the face of increasing time-based competition for service-sector firms (Mohr, & Batsakis, 2018). By increasing facilities and capacity, it is possible to meet the increased demand in transportation system adopting "supply side" strategies (Van Oort, 2016; Wilson & Shirazi, 1991).

Transport prices can be structured in various ways and price structures are affected through the consumer responses like timing, perceived cost structures, perceived fairness, attitudes, distances, age and gender (Bonsall, Dix, Stone, and Stewart, 2006); trip types, distances and users (Dargay, 2007); transport modes, and travel time (Small & Winston, 1999); population size and income (Burt & Hoover, 2006).

For transport and travel cost and price purposes, fuel price (Buehler, 2010), household demographics, income and location (Whelan, 2007); vehicle types & traveling options (Giuliano and Dargay, 2006) and socioeconomic factors and travel conditions (Karlaftis and Golias, 2002) and to evaluate the travel and transport impacts, distance, real household income, age of head of household, number of children or family tour, employment status, occupational class, availability of transport, and density are considered as the most influential factors (Santos et.al., 2011). For intercity bus carrier to get a competitive advantage, effective marketing strategies play the key role to endure in the long-distance transportation market whereas loyalty worked as a measure (Flavian, Martinez, and Polo, 2001; Long, 2017) and characterized by advocacy to others, resistance to change and relative preference of the brand in competition (Butcher, 2001).

Trust that lead to a higher level of loyalty (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Long, 2017) is based on the belief that guided to and motivated for favorable and positive intentions toward the welfare and interests of the object (Ballester and Aleman, 1999). True brand loyalty not only repeats purchasing behavior but also commits to brands through psychological and evaluative decision making approach (Bloemer and Kasper, 1995) by using multi-dimensional method of measurement (Ong, Lee, & Ramayah, 2018). Brand image focuses mental image of the consumer with symbolic meanings that associated with the specific attributes of a product or service (Cretu & Brodie, 2007; Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990) and predominantly on well-known tourist destinations (Manyiwa, Priporas, & Wang, 2018). But marketing efforts had the potential to cause switching behavior (Oliver, 1997) and made the psychological attachment to a service (Beatty, Kahle, and Homer, 1988; VanMeter et.al. 2018).

After reviewing the literature, the perception of the customers based on the variables like one stop service, waiting time and brand belief in transport and travelling service satisfaction particularly in monopoly type is rare and interesting. That's why; the matter is interesting and needs to find out the impact on customer service satisfaction.

Methodology

Here, passengers' choice of transport is a categorical variable consisting of two major categories/options: Starline Paribahan (Pvt.) Limited and other passenger transport service providers. Like all other factors, the most considerable factors for characterizing the selection of transport are income, people (family, friends, and peers), quality service, one stop service, price & availability, purpose of journey, waiting time, reputation, safety and security, professional or family tour, and brand belief.

Based on the significant attributes, questionnaire has been set. But in data screening, all factors are not significantly discriminate between these transports provider services. That's why; the revised attributes for analysis and the most significant attributes are income, price & availability, one stop service, quality service; and brand belief. Along with demographic questions in a format of open-ended questions, independent variable (Choice Factors) are attributes based where the attributes are rated based on importance scale highly important (5) to not all important (1) whereas categories prevailed as Starline Paribahan Limited and other passenger transport service providers for dependent variables. In this study, the passengers were selected from Feni and Chittagong who have already travelled by Starline.

The field survey took place in September-October 2017 with the procedure of simple random sampling. A total of 250 passengers survey, 200 were selected based on avoiding missing responses though techniques for data collection were self-completion and

interviewer filled survey. Being included into the cluster of having choices made toward transport service providers by the passengers/samples, discriminant analysis is an appropriate technique to classify the cases with categorical dependent variables and metric independent variables and to explore significant relationship (Malhotra & Dash, 2010). From the philosophical consideration, this is a 'quantitative positivist' approach under epistemological and ontological paradigm (Straub, Boudreau, & Gefen, 2004).

The typical Discriminant function is:

$$D = a + W_1X_{1k} + W_2X_{2k} + W_3X_{3k} + \dots + W_kX_{nk}$$

Where,

D = Discriminant score

a = Intercept

W_i = Discriminant Weight for Independent Variables 'i' (importance of each X in helping us distinguish the passenger transport service provider groups)

X_{ik} = Independent variables for object 'k'

Usually the sample has been split into analysis sample and holdout sample for cross validation. In this study, the analysis sample was 60% i.e. 120 cases, 60 cases for each group and holdout samples for remaining 80 cases, 40 cases for each group.

Result

The SPSS 22.0 has been used to analyze the data according to the specification required for discriminant analysis. However, the discriminant model validity justified through the significance of discriminant functions and re-classifying the cases. One of the relative importances available in discriminate analysis is to develop predictive model for generalization of other samples (Hair, Bush, & Ortinau, 2006).

Table 1 (a): Group Statistics

Passenger Transport Services	Mean	Std. Deviation	Valid N (listwise)		
			Unweighted	Weighted	
Starline	Income	3.1869	.49476	60	60
	Price	2.7471	.59964	60	60
	Brand Belief	3.6290	.63958	60	60
	Quality Service	3.3488	.79138	60	60
	Waiting Time	2.8606	.69961	60	60
	One Stop Service	3.9228	.66533	60	60
Others	Income	3.2828	.50471	60	60
	Price	2.8038	.61351	60	60
	Brand Belief	3.8015	.61494	60	60
	Quality Service	3.6763	.70343	60	60
	Waiting Time	2.8957	.71924	60	60
	One Stop Service	4.0753	.55682	60	60
Total	Income	3.2342	.50148	120	120
	Price	2.7751	.60656	120	120
	Brand Belief	3.7140	.63283	120	120
	Quality Service	3.5102	.76630	120	120
	Waiting Time	2.8779	.70884	120	120
	One Stop Service	3.9979	.61835	120	120

Table 1 (b): Tests of Equality of Group Means

	Wilks' Lambda	F	Sig.
Income	.991	4.508	.034
Price	.998	12.067	.002
Brand Belief	.981	9.234	.003
Quality Service	.954	23.356	.000
Waiting Time	.999	12.299	.002
One Stop Service	.985	7.529	.006

Group membership can be predicted on significant difference between groups on each of the independent variables using group means and ANOVA result data. Here in the Group Statistics Table (1a) , the strong evidence of significant differences were found between means of Starline Paribahan Limited and other passenger transport service providers for all independent variables like Income, price & availability, one stop service, quality service; and brand belief and also produces very high value of F's (Table 1b).

Table 2: Pooled Within-Groups Matrices^a

	Income	Price	Brand Belief	Quality Service	Waiting Time	One Stop Service
Correlation Income	1.000	.569	.251	.171	.426	.140
Price	.569	1.000	.400	.334	.438	.399
Brand Belief	.251	.400	1.000	.466	.267	.591
Quality Service	.171	.334	.466	1.000	.470	.525
Waiting Time	.426	.438	.267	.470	1.000	.313
One Stop Service	.140	.399	.591	.525	.313	1.000

Again the Pooled – Within Group Matrices (table 2) also supports use of these independent variables being low in inter-correlation.

Table 3: Eigen values

Function	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Canonical Correlation
1	2.371 ^a	100.0	100.0	.835

a. First 1 canonical discriminant functions were used in the analysis.

The minimum number of Discriminant functions is the minimum of either the number of independent variables or less than one category of dependents variables (Hair et.al, 2006). Here only one function is displayed due to considering two groups namely Starline Paribahan Limited and other passenger transport service providers in table 3. The canonical correlation is the multiple correlations between the predictors and the discriminant function. So a canonical correlation of 0.835 suggests the model explaining 69.72% (R²) of the variation in the grouping variables whether a passenger choice either on Starline Paribahan Limited or other passenger transport service providers.

Table 4: Wilks' Lambda

Test of Function(s)	Wilks' Lambda	Chi-square	df	Sig.
1	.933	33.380	6	.000

Here in Table 4, Wilks' Lambda Values exerted the significance of the function. The chi-square statistics is also supporting to the Wilks' Lambda for statistical significance means to have a relation between dependent groups and independent variables.

Table 5: Standardized Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients

	Function
	1
Income	.555
Price	-.329
Brand Belief	.443
Quality Service	.864
Waiting Time	.519
One Stop Service	.790

The Standard Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients provides the index of each predictor where sign indicates the direction of relationship. Quality service was the strongest predictor while one stop service, income, waiting time, brand belief, and price was next in importance as predictor in Table 5.

Table 6: Structure Matrix

	Function
	1
Quality Service	.820
One Stop Service	.515
Brand Belief	.465
Waiting Time	.460
Price	.275
Income	.193

Pooled within-groups correlations between discriminating variables and standardized canonical discriminant functions

Variables ordered by absolute size of correlation within function.

In Table 6, the structure matrix indicates the relative importance of the predictors and correlations means to shows the correlation of each variable with each discriminate function i.e. discriminant loadings. Usually the cut-off value between important and less important variables is 0.30 like factor analysis loadings, here price and income clearly not loaded on the discriminant functions means to weakest predictors and suggests that these attributes are not differentiating the build-up factors between Starline and other services, but a function of other un-assessed factors.

Table 7: Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients

	Function
	1
Income	.410
Price	-.342
Brand Belief	.429
Quality Service	.487
Waiting Time	.431
One Stop Service	.446
(Constant)	-.599

Unstandardized coefficients

The Un-standardized Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients are used to create the discriminant function equation which provides relative importance of each of the predictor in the Table 7. In this case, the discriminant function is-

$$D = (0.487 \times \text{Quality Service}) - (0.342 \times \text{Price}) + (0.429 \times \text{Brand Belief}) + (0.410 \times \text{Income}) + (0.446 \times \text{One Stop Service}) + (0.431 \times \text{Waiting Time}) - 0.599$$

Table 8: Functions at Group Centroids

Services	Function	
	1	
Starline		-.263
Others		.263

Unstandardized canonical discriminant functions evaluated at group means

Group Centroid describes each group in terms of its profile using group means (Centroid) of the predictor variables and it is discriminatory as well as per the table value (Table8).

Table 9(a): Classification Results^{a,c}

Services			Predicted Group Membership		Total
			Starline	Others	
Original	Count	Starline	110	10	120
		Others	13	107	120
	%	Starline	91.67	8.33	100.0
		Others	10.84	89.16	100.0
Cross-validated ^b	Count	Starline	113	7	120
		Others	15	105	120
	%	Starline	94.17	5.83	100.0
		Others	12.5	87.5	100.0

a. 90.41% of original grouped cases correctly classified.

b. Cross validation is done only for those cases in the analysis. In cross validation, each case is classified by the functions derived from all cases other than that case.

c. 90.83% of cross-validated grouped cases correctly classified.

Table 9(b): Classification Results^{a,c} for cases not selected for use in the analysis (Holdout Sample)

Predictors			Predicted Group Membership		Total
			Starline	Others	
Original	Count	Starline	37	3	40
		Others	4	36	40
	%	Starline	92.5	7.5	100
		Others	10	90	100
Cross-validated ^b	Count	Starline	36	4	40
		Others	6	34	40
	%	Starline	90	10	100
		Others	15	85	100

- a. 91.25% of original grouped cases correctly classified.
- b. Cross validation is done only for those cases in the analysis. In cross validation, each case is classified by the functions derived from all cases other than that case.
- c. 87.5% of cross-validated grouped cases correctly classified.

The classification result reveals that 90.41% of respondents were correctly classified in between groups (Hit ratio) in Table 9(a). The passengers opined that Starline (91.67%) is classified with slightly better accuracy than those of other transport (89.16%), which is larger than the chance ratio (50/50 for equal size group). Most researchers accepted a hit ratio of more than 25% due to chance and here 90.83% of cross-validated grouped cases correctly classified. Again in Table 9(b), the classification result for cases not selected for use in the analysis (holdout sample) is 87.5 % of cross-validated grouped cases correctly classified. Finally, the discrimination function has got worthiness of prediction on the passengers' choice preference by considering relevant attributes.

Discussion & Conclusion

Here in compare to the price perceptions, the satisfied customers of Starline shows loyalty with the existing price, that's why the negative attitude spectacted here in discriminant functions. Very concretely, the price itself is not a significant differentiator between Starline and other transport services. The income on the other hand, has a low in profound effect on discrimination in a sense that the different income holders were used both of the services either from Starline and other transport services depending on the situation. And these tolerances are also similar evidentially with the earlier study of van Lierop, & El-Geneidy (2016). Personal needs educate customers on ways the service addresses their needs. Perceived service alternatives are used to aware of competitive offerings and addressed to match appropriately with needs. In fact, company's reputation or brand attractions are generally supportive for customer with a view to combining company's earlier role and how well the company's general performances coping with the social and political environment. Similar to the study of de Oña (2013), the factors-cleanliness and comfort considered here for justification of perceived satisfaction and loyalty, especially on influencing users' on-board experiences.

Again the waiting time and one stop services are special services opted by Starline for maintaining desired service expectation for being customers happy and worked against competitors. Very specifically, waiting time works as an influential factor depending on urgency where in one stop service, no passenger should uplift other than counter. And here location of counters is in a short distance from the starting point based on the destination. Like earlier studies of Figler et al. (2011) and Carreira et. al. (2014), this study incorporated the common factors for differentiating the positive relational factors of satisfaction studies for both of the service providers.

In order to predict travel behavior, both of the service providers ought to give importance on understanding how individual characteristics of a person interact with the characteristics of the situation, therefore understanding the positive and negative evaluative factors influencing destination choices of the people. The future study should undertake more samples along with extending area coverage for generating discriminant functions or relevant multivariate analysis for the same. In reality, the factors imposed to be a monopoly business concern in this territory particularly on passenger travel service by quality service. In fine, it is observed that the trust achieved by the brand/Starline and one

stop service got unique psychological positioning among the passengers are somewhat untapped contributors of the revenue of Starline in this region and unnoticed monopoly view in the services.

Limitation of the Study and Direction for Future Research

This study incorporated the usual factors for differentiating the transport service loyalty particularly in a region where few other transport service providers though dominant nationally were unavailable and not to be considered as suitable segment. However, few influential factors like costs, and quality of transfers could not count due to less evidential for arousing passengers' interest in this area. In addition, future studies might focus on the other service factors that influence satisfaction and loyalty in different geographical conditions. In this case passengers' priority regarding transport choices can consider. The intensity toward a particular bus service/transport service arousing satisfaction induces loyalty debate, which is another research gap for future researcher as well.

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