

Competition and Choice among Intercity Bus Operators in Nigeria

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Abstract— The study examined the competition and choice among inter-city bus operators. The population for the study is made up of 17 transport companies drawn from the available ones plying inter-city routes. Three hundred and ninety copies of questionnaires were administered and analyzed using simple descriptive and percentage frequency. Principal component analysis (PCA) was used to determine the degree of importance of the factors that affect the competition and the choice among the intercity bus operators. Findings revealed the order of the factors as safety (0.995), availability (0.993), frequency of service (0.992), comfort & space (0.990), On-off board services (0.981), convenience (0.959), government policy (0.949), schedule reliability (0.948), crew behaviour (0.890) and cost (0.804) affected the competition and the choice among the intercity bus operators. The study recommends the need for government to step in fully to control the operation of inter-city bus transport in the country, to formulate and review the existing national transport policy that guides and regulate operations of transport services.

Index Terms— inter-city bus operators, Principal component analysis (PCA) .

I. INTRODUCTION

Public transport operation in Nigeria is basically the responsibility of a joint group of the private and public sector operators. According to Aworemi and Ilori (2008) the private sector operators are by far the largest provider of passenger's services. The currently provides more than 90% of all urban passengers transport services in Nigeria. Among this group are the relatively few large-scale operators of bus fleet, who usually provide long-distance, while so many other operators of small vehicle units such as minibuses, taxis, space-wagons, and semi/smaller coastal buses which also provide both inter urban passenger transport services are unincorporated but belong to one association or the other. More the public and private transport operators are majorly owned by the government and private individuals respectively and also permit for franchising.

Intercity transport services in Nigeria have been dominated by private operators who dictate largely the operational characteristic in terms of facility provision, services, and standards in the industry. Such decisions are usually economically based and most times not totally in favour of the intended passengers. Part of the difficulties faced by the operators of the intercity road passenger transport services in Nigeria is the lack of understanding of intercity travel

behavior and analysis of trip generation and socio-economic development factors in an area. This transport sub-sector has witnessed appreciable development. According to Emenike (2005) 90% of the daily passenger traffic uses the highways, the intercity bus transport has become an indispensable part of our daily life, especially in the large developing urban cities in Nigeria. It has been a supporting industry for the nation to meet the goals of improving mobility, protecting the environment and saving energy. Over the years, there have been phenomenal increases in the demand for intercity passenger transport in the fast growing cities in Nigeria. This has been due to increasing personal income, improved transportation infrastructures and availability of vehicles for long distance travels in the market (Ekong&Uwem, 2013). In Nigeria for instance, the demand for intercity and regional trips in public transport rose from 41.5% in 1986 to about 65% in 1990 (Ekong&Uwem, 2013).

The increase in the number of intercity bus operators has resulted in the introduction of all variety of enticements by the operators to the passengers, more often; the big players/operators are aware of the competitive nature of the industry with a few others and use its operational attributes as a means to attract more passengers' patronage.

Road transportation is the principal mode of transport in Nigeria, accounting for the vast majority of freight and passenger travel. Intercity transport is an essential ingredient in enhancing productivity since there is always the need to move or transfer and distribute people and things. Perhaps. Admittedly, one important role of transport is that it is a catalyst for other factors of production. The function of intercity transport in this spectrum is to provide the means of effecting such movements from city to city, the need for the provision of an effective and adequate intercity transport services has become critical and inevitable.

Significant interest has been generated in recent years concerning the operation of the intercity bus industry. The reasons for this interest include the numerous challenges resulting to competition experience by the and operators of this industry, which ranges from acquiring of executive to higher capacity buses with adequate sitting space and comfort at higher cost, high cost of operation to attract patronage (passengers) edging the less financially buoyant operators, availability of air conditioner, availability of large variety of fleets (vehicles).

Evidently, the level of competitiveness among the transport providers has increased by the various strategies they adopt to attract patronage. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the nature of competition and choice characterizing the intercity bus industry in Nigeria. The following issues would be addressed; to examine the

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determinants of choice for a particular transport company by users and the operational characteristics of the intercity bus transport operators. Therefore while it can be said that many researchers have contributed to the knowledge of intercity transport, its importance and impacts on the socio-economic development of Nigeria, not much has been done in this area relating to intercity bus transport competition, choice and operational rivalry existing in the industry.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is concerned with an examination of competition and choice among intercity bus transport operators in Nigeria. Data collected was based on the recognized intercity transport companies in operations in the major motor parks in Port Harcourt metropolis. Questionnaires were administered to the transport operators and its users, to sample the trip characteristics, user’s satisfaction, determinants of choice of Transport Company and operational characteristics of the transport companies. A total number of 398 questionnaires were administered to the sampled population, retrieving 390 completed ones. Seventeen transport companies were identified for this study based on their availability, traffic generation and nature of operation. These operators include:

conceptualized as a passenger’s selection of a transportation bus company from a set of alternatives. The selection is determined by various variables including the comparative attributes of the transport bus companies in the consideration set. A passenger would be expected to choose a transport company that generates the highest level of satisfaction. Different methods have been employed in determining passengers choice of a transport company and for the purpose of this study, the study employed the responses of the sampled travellers on their choice for opting to travel with a particular transport company amidst possible options available to their disposal. These attributes were measured using their frequency of observation and Principal Component Analysis (PCA). From the total (390) observation it shows that safety rated highest for all the sampled transport companies followed by availability, comfort and space, cost, frequency of service, convenience, schedule reliability, crew behaviour, on-off board services and government policy. There is the need for intercity bus transport companies to make themselves preferred travelling choice since the majority of Nigerian population travel road.

Table: 1. Transport operators

| | |
|----|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | G.U Okeke |
| 2 | Silver Travel |
| 3 | Agufore Eleme |
| 4 | Benue Links |
| 5 | Ameosa Motors |
| 6 | Cross Country |
| 7 | Genaro Express |
| 8 | Dominion Express |
| 9 | Akwa Ibom Transport Company (A.K.T.C) |
| 10 | Imo City Mass |
| 11 | Rahony Transport |
| 12 | BOB Izua |
| 13 | Agufore Choba |
| 14 | Agufore Rumuokoro |
| 15 | Rivers State Transport Company (RTC) |
| 16 | Delking Express |
| 17 | Rumuokoro Motorpark (NURTW) |

Source: Extracted from Amamilo (2015)

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This research analyzed the determinants of choice of transport operator among users of intercity bus service, and to evaluate the degree of competition among the operators of intercity transport passenger transport in Nigeria.

A. DETERMINANTS OF CHOICE FOR A TRANSPORT COMPANY

The choice for intercity bus transport operator can be

Table 2: Frequencies of attributes of transport companies

| S/N | Transport companies | Safety | Availability | Comfort & space | Cost | Frequency of service | Convenience | Schedule reliability | Crew behaviour | On-off board services | Government policy |
|-----|---------------------|--------|--------------|-----------------|------|----------------------|-------------|----------------------|----------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | G.U.O Motors | 6 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | Silver travels | 10 | 10 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 0 | 2 |
| 3 | Aguforeleme | 30 | 34 | 28 | 20 | 35 | 34 | 29 | 25 | 20 | 5 |
| 4 | Benue links | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| 5 | Ameosa motors | 4 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| 6 | Cross country | 4 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| 7 | Genoro express | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 0 |
| 8 | Dominion | 5 | 6 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 0 |
| 9 | AKTC | 19 | 19 | 15 | 14 | 10 | 18 | 20 | 15 | 0 | 1 |
| 10 | Imo city mass | 12 | 13 | 10 | 8 | 14 | 12 | 13 | 12 | 7 | 5 |
| 11 | Rahony transport | 5 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 3 | 0 |
| 12 | Bob izua | 12 | 10 | 12 | 6 | 9 | 10 | 12 | 9 | 10 | 0 |
| 13 | Agofurechoba | 20 | 20 | 15 | 8 | 19 | 21 | 22 | 18 | 8 | 8 |
| 14 | Agofurerumuokoro | 48 | 50 | 38 | 20 | 45 | 48 | 50 | 38 | 30 | 12 |
| 15 | RTC | 98 | 100 | 86 | 51 | 98 | 100 | 100 | 16 | 1 | 32 |
| 16 | Delking express | 15 | 10 | 12 | 8 | 10 | 10 | 12 | 15 | 8 | 0 |
| 17 | NURTW rumuokoro | 25 | 15 | 2 | 48 | 29 | 15 | 10 | 10 | 0 | 1 |

Source: Extracted from Amamilo (2015)

Table 3: Principal Component Analysis of transport operators attributes

| Component | Initial Eigenvalues | | | Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings | | | Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings | | |
|-----------|---------------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % |
| 1 | 7.994 | 79.936 | 79.936 | 7.994 | 79.936 | 79.936 | 7.317 | 73.170 | 73.170 |
| 2 | 1.475 | 14.746 | 94.682 | 1.475 | 14.746 | 94.682 | 2.151 | 21.512 | 94.682 |
| 3 | .401 | 4.012 | 98.694 | | | | | | |
| 4 | .087 | .865 | 99.559 | | | | | | |
| 5 | .033 | .333 | 99.892 | | | | | | |
| 6 | .006 | .056 | 99.949 | | | | | | |
| 7 | .003 | .027 | 99.976 | | | | | | |
| 8 | .001 | .013 | 99.989 | | | | | | |
| 9 | .001 | .009 | 99.997 | | | | | | |
| 10 | .000 | .003 | 100.000 | | | | | | |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Source: Authors Analysis, 2018.

Table 4: Component Matrix^a

| | Component | |
|-----------------------|-----------|-------|
| | 1 | 2 |
| Safety | .995 | -.087 |
| Availability | .993 | -.050 |
| Comfort & Space | .990 | -.116 |
| Cost | .804 | -.250 |
| Frequency of Service | .992 | -.088 |
| Convenience | .992 | -.061 |
| Schedule reliability | .986 | -.047 |
| Crew Behaviour | .651 | .719 |
| On-Off Board Services | .368 | .911 |
| Government policy | .946 | -.166 |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
a. 2 components extracted

Source: Authors Analysis, 2018.

Table 5: Rotated Component Matrix^a of transport operators attributes

| | Component | |
|-----------------------|-----------|------|
| | 1 | 2 |
| Safety | .969 | .238 |
| Availability | .956 | .272 |
| Comfort & Space | .975 | .209 |
| Cost | .841 | .022 |
| Frequency of Service | .967 | .236 |
| Convenience | .959 | .262 |
| Schedule reliability | .948 | .273 |
| Crew behaviour | .385 | .890 |
| On-Off Board Services | .055 | .981 |
| Government policy | .949 | .147 |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations

Source: Authors Analysis, 2018.

From the Principal Component Analysis displayed on table 3, 4 & 5, it revealed that amongst the variables measured, the variance or ordinary matrix of the PCA in table 3 shows that safety (0.995), availability (0.993), comfort & space (0.990), cost (0.804), frequency of service (0.992), convenience (0.959), schedule reliability (0.948), and government policy (0.949) loaded heavily in component 1. This component 1, accounted for 79.9% in the total variance of the transport operators attributes.

Component 2 accounted for 14.7% of the variance with crew behaviour (0.890), and On-off board services (0.981),

having heavy loading. However, the loadings of rotated components in transport operators attributes displayed in table 3 reveals that 73.1%, and 21.5% of the variance were accounted for in component 1, and 2, respectively. Furthermore, safety (0.969), availability (0.956), comfort & space (0.975), cost (0.841), frequency of service (0.967), convenience (0.959), schedule reliability (0.948), and government policy (0.949) were heavily loaded in component 1. In component 2, crew behaviour (0.890) and on-off board services (0.981), were heavily loaded (see table 5). The PCA applied on the variables to determine the choice of passengers for a particular transport operator clearly indicate

a positive determinants, therefore, it can be said that all these factors are applicable and significant in any transport related study on passengers choice determinants, and competition amongst transport operators.

Discussion on theof choice for a transport company

The choice for a particular transport company for ones travelling needs is basically influenced by these variables as identified and discussed below;

- a. **SAFETY:** Safe arrival to a choice destination of a traveller desire is a very important aspect of transport operation. Therefore from the responses of sampled users, it revealed that safety is the major cumulative determinants in choice decision making. See table 2; on individual company ratings, transport companies like RTC (98), Agufore Motors (98), AKTC (19), and Delking express (15) among others all recorded a high rate to safety attribute. This can be related to the fact that majority of the companies tend to reduce reckless driving and over speeding on the part of their drivers, the management has given each driver a time frame to arrive at his destination station, with a stipulated speed limit. This shows that this attributes is considered to be of great importance in the choice of transport Bus Company. A close analysis of the follow-up interview by the researcher shows that drivers still not adhere completely to these rules whereas the management lack total commitment to its rules and regulations. Generally, in order to improve the safety attribute, operators should endeavour to purchase new vehicles with speed limit devices, improve their maintenance culture to maintain standard, and adhering to road traffic regulation should be paramount.
- b. **AVAILABILITY:** The presence of a choice of intercity bus Transport Company for its users simply connotes its availability when they are needed by travellers. In line with the transport company daily schedule. The variable can be operationalize as when a transport operator schedules a vehicle, it's accessible and ready for use. Table 2 display the frequencies of passengers' responses such as RTC (100), Agufore motors (104) and AKTC (19), to indicate that these operators were always available when needed.
- c. **COMFORT AND SPACE:** Comfort and space in the context of this study will be viewed from the perspective of vehicular number of seats, passengers per seat and leg space, etc. It simply connotes the use of intercity bus transport service where users feel at ease and have enough freedom while onboard the vehicle. Whereas a good number of the users suggest that transport companies should improve in areas of giving customers their desired quality service to suit with their trip fare. It was noted that majority of sampled operators such as G.U.O motors (2) and commercial buses under the auspices of the N.U.R.T.W (Rumuokoro Park) (2) recorded a low

rating from their users. According to the sampled respondents the socio-economic variables namely: Age, Sex, Occupation, Income, and Educational status shows that male and female travellers between 21-60 years, and above tertiary education level, businessmen and student considered comfort and space as relevant in determining their mode and choice of intercity bus travel.

- d. **COST:** Cost refers to the price at which a service is provided. In the context of this study cost refers to the price in monetary terms of travelling by transport bus service, or moving luggage through the luxury bus, trucks and vans etc. Cost is a major factor in transportation studies, also acknowledged by Emenike (2016). Not quite long ago when there were still relatively few intercity transport companies in operation. Fares were perceived to be agreed upon by all carriers as all charged the same or nearly similar fare. But with the reforms and liberalization of the transportation sector, more and strong transport companies entered the sector. Many companies now offer e-booking, pre-booking, and normal daily booking at reduce fare to compare to other companies that operates on same routes. Fare is seen to be a major determinant of modal choice likewise where some passengers still choose to maintain their ego-social status to patronize the best transport service with special designed buses (executive class) irrespective of any extra cost.
- e. **CONVENIENCE:** Convenience can be related to a quality or situation that makes something easy or useful for someone by reducing the amount of work or time required. It further implies the absence of unnecessary delays and the ability of the intercity buses to keep up to their schedule time for journey.
- f. **SCHEDULE RELIABILITY:** Schedule reliability will be represented by passenger's perception of the steady service frequency and confident upon the services of the transport bus company. Reliability as an attribute of the transport bus companies implies the extent to which passengers rely and depend on the physical and mechanical condition of the transport buses. There has been an improvement in the quality of service and effectiveness of trips, due to the effect of competition among operators, majority of the transport companies opt to improve their services to maintain and attract more customer's patronage. Empirical observations gathered that G.U.O motors and N.U.R.T.W (Rumuokoro Park) have unstable and unreliable schedule reliability/availability. The both shares a similar attributes of overloading, cancellation of trips due to unavailability of buses etc. this tend to reduce patronage from users over time.
- g. **CREW BEHAVIOUR AND ON-OFFBOARD SERVICE:** Transportation on-off board services refer to the extra services rendered to the customers or users of the intercity bus transport while waiting at the departure hall (terminal) and onboard the bus.

Such services include serving of snacks and drinks, showing of video clips/television programmes and temporal newspapers distribution. Crew behaviour is an important attribute, it is important at the terminal and enroute to one's destination. It can be vital in winning the decision of undecided passengers who are yet to make a choice of a transport company, such customer relationship is very important. It could be responsible for many choice of certain transport company. On board treatment of bus travellers on previous trips can go a long way in deciding whether to use the transport company in their subsequent trips.

h. GOVERNMENT POLICY: the policy of government at the three tiers apparently is not effective towards their role in infrastructural development and maintenance. Nigeria has become increasingly dependent on the road mode transport system to meet virtually all its transportation needs, as the rail, pipeline, and inland waterways systems have deteriorated, despite its recent sectional rehabilitation by the Federal Government. At the same time, the road network itself has suffered from continuing lack of maintenance and investment by the three tiers of Government, Federal, State and the Local Government.

The current dependence of the larger population of Nigerians using road transport system, increases the urgency to address this issue. Unless roads and bridges are kept in good conditions they cannot support the desired socio-economic development of the country. More so it is important to note that the intercity bus transport operators finds the deplorable state of Nigerian roads to be an alarming situation that invariably affects the conditions of their vehicles. Therefore its constitute to a huge factor that affect the cost of operation and cost transport fare, passengers find themselves in a situation of choice making between transport operators in relation to their fare charged. It is important to note that the variables analysed above were all significant in the context of this study, as to the fact that they collectively make up the factors influencing passengers' choice towards a particular transport operator. Likewise acting as a variables in measuring and triggering healthy competition among intercity transport operators in Nigeria.

The adopted categories of choice is suited for the intercity passenger travel; they are evaluative choice, discriminative choice and autonomous choice (Wikipedia, 2018). Choice involves mentally making a decision; judging the merits of multiple options and selecting one or more of them. One can make a choice between imagined options or between real options followed by the corresponding action based on the preference of arriving at a given destination safely as soon as possible.

i) **Evaluative Choice:** it pertains to passengers who weigh their alternatives. This means that travellers making their choice must carefully look at the available transport operators' alternative in terms of their attributes. That, people do not experience choice unless one of their available option is at least as

desirable as their comparison set, where a comparison set refer to the values attached to the attributes of each alternative. Variety of choice experienced when the available option exceeds the comparison level.

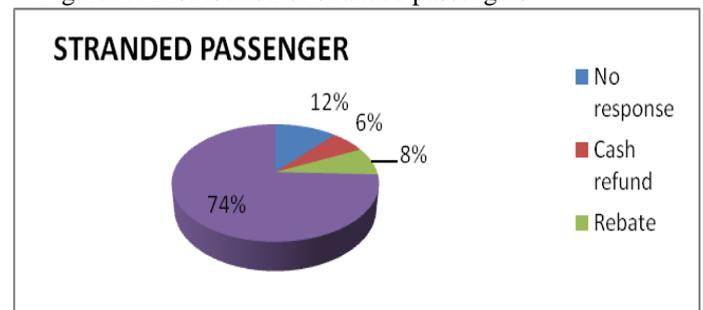
ii) **Discriminative Choice:** it occurs when passenger's tries to make distinction from two or more alternatives at least as attractive as their comparison set. In this case, they will compare one variable with another to maximize their benefits.

iii) **Autonomous Choice:** occurs when two alternatives are complex (contain more than one positive attribute) and differ in several dimensions. In this situation, it is not immediately clear which alternative will provide better options. When a passenger is faced with this kind of choice, his individual preference guides his reevaluation process and the individual determines the decision rather the obvious quality of the options. In this case individual traveller decision maker is perceived as autonomous and the experience to choose is called autonomous choice.

Travellers' response to stranded passengers

The operators response towards stranded passengers, also contributes to future decisions made by users in patronizing the same transport company, or to take alternatives. Figure 1; below shows that 74.36% of the stranded passengers got recovered by another vehicle sent by the operators. Rebate (7.69%) i.e. if the transport company in question cannot perform the recovery operation due to one logistics reason or the other, part payment from the initial fare is refunded to the passengers, while 6.41% got cash refund. 11.54% of the respondents did not respond to the question.

Figure: 1. Distribution of stranded passengers



Source: Extracted from Amamilo,(2015).

COMPETITION AMONG INTERCITY TRANSPORT COMPANIES

The intercity transport companies including the government and privately owned are in operation within the informal sector of the Nigerian economy, certain level of rivalry do exist. And where modal attributes is used as a weapon to attract customers. The intercity bus transport industry operates within the market structure (Emenike, 2005).

As recognized by the Competition Authority (2009), there are three categories of competition that can be adopted for transport bus operators to achieve the purpose of this study; Head tohead competition, potential competition and new

entry.

- a) **Head to Head Competition:** The constraint on operators from passengers switching to competing operators for a particular journey, this arises where operators overlap in whole or in part on their routes and complete directly. We consider that head-to-head competition is effective if it compels the behaviour of a bus operator so that fares, frequencies and other aspects of its offer are at competitive levels. This occurs where a sufficiently large proportion of passenger would substitute to other operators in response to a reduction in the value of an operator's competitive offer. This will depend on the proportion of passengers' journey occurring where overlaps apply, and whether customers are likely to switch (e.g. depending on whether rival services operate at similar times, with similar frequency, journey time and so on).
- b) **Potential Competition:** The challenges on existing transport operators from the threat that new rivals might redeploy or expand their existing services and start competing head-to-head. Potential competitors are operators with existing services and facilities in their incumbent's area of operation.
- c) **New Entry:** The challenges on existing operator's current behavior from the threat that new entrants

might start competing head-to-head. New entrants are transport operators without existing services and facilities nearby. But intend to have a robust operational framework to fit into the competitive transport market.

THE BENEFITS OF COMPETITION WITHIN THE TRANSPORT SECTOR

Competition within the intercity bus industry benefits virtually everyone, that is; the passengers, operators and the economy at large. It keeps prices and costs down. It improves choice and quality for all. It raises innovation in the form of new product and services into the sector and support economic growth. These benefits arise because competition encourages transport companies to compete for patronage. Thereby customers benefits from paying less and getting multiple choices and quality for their money, when passengers' benefit from competition, then the economy do too. Where there is a lack of competition, for instance, a situation of monopoly do exist in operation, transport companies do not competes for customers. In such cases the customers suffers as a result of higher fare charges, lesser choice and lower quality of service. Adequate competition among transport operators keeps pricesfor passengers down and improve other variables such as quality of service, reliability, and safety amongst others by stimulating rivalry between them.

B. OPERATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF TRANSPORT OPERATORS

TABLE 3: FARE STRUCTURE.

| Transport company | Routes of operation | Fare charges |
|--------------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| Bob Izua | Benin | 2050 |
| Cross country | Abuja, Kano, Lagos, Jos, Bauchi, Ibadan, Calabar, | 5000, 7000, 4000, 6000, |
| Amaeosa motors | Warri, Benin, Bayelsa | 1450, 1850, 1000. |
| G.U.O motors | Sokoto | 4000 |
| Agofure motors | Lagos | 3000 |
| AKTC | Uyo, Calabar | 1050, 1650. |
| Genaro express | Lagos, Abuja | 5500, 6500 |
| Imo city mass | Owerri | 500-800 |
| Dominion express | Lagos | 3500 |
| Rahony transport | Lagos, Abuja, Kano, Kaduna, | 3600, 4100, 7000, 5500 |
| RTC (Rivers State transport company) | Lagos, Onitsha, Uyo, Calabar, Warri | 3600, 1500 |
| Silver travel | Makurdi, Otukpo, Gboko, Lafia, Jos. | 3000, 2500, 3500, 4000 |
| Benue links | Makurdi, Gboko | 2000 |
| DELKING express | Abuja, Benin | Not given |
| Rumuokoro motor park | Uyo, Calabar, Bayelsa, Owerri | Not given |

Source: Source: Extracted from Amamilo (2015)

Fare is an important aspect of public transport service. It is the amount paid by passengers to bus operators for an intended journey. The fare charged by the various operators of intercity transport depends on the routes and the type of vehicle scheduled. For example the cost of a Toyota Hiace bus (Hummer bus) and Toyota Sienna vary, even with the luxury bus. The cost of a journey not only affected by the types of bus, is also affected by the nature and type of onboard/off-board terminal services, like television viewing,

toilet provision, and air conditioned buses. Also note in table 3, fare charges were as of the time of this survey, moreover changes might have occurred over time due to changes in government policy, cost of petroleum, and other operational indices that significantly affects fare structure as of today.

MODE OF OPERATIONS

In the operation of the intercity transport industry, intercity buses may run less frequently with fewer stops than a transit bus service. The operators mainly operates on day time travel system except for those trips destination that cannot be

covered during the day which enters the night time travel, the scheduled departure time ranges from 5:30am to 6:30pm. Transport companies also carry out other logistic services such as the RTC, Benue link, Silver travel, among others. The number of vehicles allocated for daily trips depends solely on the demand by passengers, for peak periods especially during festive period a range of 1 – 15 buses on the average are scheduled for operation to different routes/destination and 1-5 buses on the averages for off peak periods.

Vehicle provision for the operation of intercity bus passenger travel are majorly 7 – 8 seating capacity for sienna cars, 14 – 18 seating capacity for minibuses and the 47 – 59 luxury bus seating capacity. Some of these transport operators provides exclusive or executive buses for intercity transport services, they are designed to offer comfortable seats, good leg space and large baggage capacity for long distance transport services.

In addition, the Toyota hiace buses now has executive class used by some transport operators, furnished with soft seats, spacious with no room for attachment and bulky luggage. This is to give the customers a refreshed look after a long journey. In order to ensure convenience and efficient service delivery, a strict scheduled departure time has been fixed and implemented by some operators so that when passengers miss their departure time, they can only blame themselves. Mobile and stationery check points management officials have been installed in most cities/routes the ply. This is to enable the companies' monitor their vehicles for further check and assistance in case of travelling challenges and other vehicular related problems.

The introduction of transport insurance scheme which has been in operation and implemented by few transport operators, like the Benue links, RTC, etc., they are insured against any form of accidents during the course of their trip. It was observed that the fleet size available per transport companies ranges from 2-1822 vehicles. There are various models and types of vehicles used by the different transport companies. They include: Marcopolo, Buscar model marcopolo Toyota hiace buses (mini/hummer buses) commuter bus, Toyota sienna, Toyota picnic, cabs, vans etc. The route of operations ranges from Port Harcourt-Benin-Lagos, Port Harcourt – Abuja, - Kaduna – Kano – Sokoto, Port Harcourt – Onitsha – Abuja, Port Harcourt – Aba/Enugu – Gboko, Otukpo - Makurdi, - Zaria – Maiduguri, Port Harcourt – Owerri.

The number of drivers available per bus is just one, No technician attached on board the vehicle while the number of passengers per vehicle varies and its ranges from 7 - 14 and 59 seating capacity.

IV. CONCLUSION

To achieve a successful operation of the intercity bus transport service, and to enhance efficiency and healthy intercity bus transport system in Nigeria, the Federal Government and transport operators need to adhere and effectively implement the recommendations below. And extend more attention to other transportations modes to limit the unhealthy competitions existing in the intercity bus industry as a result of large concentration and pressure on this

mode of travel.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

There is need for Government to step in fully to control the operation of intercity bus transport in the country. Strict regulation should be drawn to guarantee good quality service in terms of safety, serviceability, mechanical condition and sanitary condition of vehicles, fixed fare tariffs in accordance to trip duration, exceptional services, and strict compliance to agreement on vehicle capacity/carriage between operators and passengers.

There is the need to formulate and review the existing national transport policy that guides and regulate operations of the transport services to incorporate these findings/challenges of the intercity transport operators.

Majority of the Nigerian population make use of road transport. To reduce this competition and congestion on the road and limit other transport challenges experience by operators and passengers. There should be a quick response in revitalizing the water (Inland) and rail transport system as seen in the Aviation sector.

I suggest for total re-construction of modern rail tracts to accommodate high speed trains to be fits the reputation of Nigeria and to enhance adequate usage of the rail mode of transportation likewise same attention should be given to Inland waterways transport where the channels would be adequately drained and maintained with adequate security and infrastructures needed for safety operation of the mode.

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