

# Understanding Customer Complaint Behaviour for Sustainable Business Development: Evidence from Nigeria's Organized Road Transport Sector

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## Abstract

This study investigates the nature and strength of key factors influencing customer complaint behavior (CCB) in the organized road transport industry in Imo State, Nigeria. Using questionnaire in a survey, 348 respondents drawn from the customers of seven organized road transport firms. The study reveals, principally, that all the six hypothetical constructs (situational, demographic, psychological, service-provider, purchased-service factors, and industry condition) have a significant impact on customer complaint behavior. Further, among the twenty-three antecedents evaluated, a gender of respondents and the size of the company are not significant predictors of customer complaint behavior. A new model of customer complaint behavior for sustainable business development in capacity building is proposed with critical attention to the customers' identified critical areas of service failure while consolidating on the identified factors influencing patronage of the organized road transporters. The role of government in providing and enforcing effective regulation is also emphasized.

**Keywords:** customer complaint behavior, Organized Road Transport Firms, sustainable development

## 1. Introduction

The process of service delivery is failure-prone as a result of the unique characteristics of service provision that distinguish it from physical goods. Agbonifoh, Ogwo, Nnolim, and Nkannebe (2007) and Okpara (2012) identified some of the service characteristics as Inseparability, Intangibility, Perishability, and Heterogeneity. Heterogeneity, which implies variability in quality often leads to customer dissatisfaction especially when a particular service experience is perceived by the customer has failed. Dissatisfaction, which is an outcome of service failure, may cause customers to react in certain ways by voicing their feelings through complaints. Although scholars around the globe have agreed that customers find it very difficult to voice their complaints to the service providers, customer complaints have remained an invaluable tool for service quality improvement (Anyanwu, 2008; Granner, 2003; Kotler and Keller, 2007; Scoefer, 2013; TARP, 2010; Tax and Brown, 1998;). Tax and Brown (1998) assert that only 5% - 10% of dissatisfied customers choose to complain about a service failure. Kotler and Keller (2007) revealed that 95% of customers who do not complain, feel that complaining is not worth the effort, or they do not know how or to whom to complain. Yet, only 50% of the customers who complain report a satisfactory problem resolution improvement (Anyanwu, 2008; Granner, 2003; Kotler and Keller, 2007; Scoefer, 2013; TARP, 2010; Tax and Brown, 1998).

Customer complaint behavior is an important phenomenon for organizations and should be understood because of its impact on customers' perceptions of the service experience (Tronvoll, 2008). To serve customers correctly and prevent unfavorable service experience that may jeopardize the competitive position of an organization, learning about the customers' complaint behavior process becomes imperative especially for service providers. Supporting this view, Tronvoll (2008), Anyanwu (2008), and Huppertz (2003) disclosed that understanding how and why customers behave in certain manners gives the service provider an insight into many areas such as identifying common service problems (Harari, 1992; Johnston & Mahra, 2002), improving service design and delivery (Marquis & Fileatranlt, 2002; Tax & Brown, 1998), understanding the customers' perceived service quality (Edvardson 1992; Harrison & Wavier 2001), helping strategic planning (Droge and Halstead, 1991; Johnston & Mehra, 2002; Onah & Thomas, 2004), improving service quality through useful customer information (Ombudsman Western Australia, 2010). Empirical studies have shown that customers whose complaints are

satisfactorily resolved often become more company loyal than customers who were never dissatisfied (Anyanwu, 2008; Agbonifoh, Ogwo, Nnolim & Nkamnebe, 2007; Raghavan, 2013; Ravichandran, 2010; Tax, Brown & Chandra, 1988). Scholars have also identified reasons for not complaining by dissatisfied customers. The key reasons include, inadequate level of dissatisfaction (Halstead, 2002; Singh & Pandya, 1991), lack of customer motivation and ability to complain (Blodgett, Granbors & Waters 1993; Huppertz, 2003), the products relative unimportance (Anderson, 1998), the expectation that complaining would result in a poor outcome (Tax & Brown 1998; Onah & Thomas, 2004), personality (Davidow & Dacin, 1997), not knowing how and where to complain (Agbonifoh et al., 2007; Borden & tell, 1983), lack of time, access to complaint channel, knowledge, etc (Tronvoll, 2008). In all, the behavior of customers towards seeking a solution to service failure through voice (complaint) differs.

In Nigeria, the service sector is prone to failure as the industry is highly labor-intensive (Agbonifoh et al., 2007; Anyanwu, 2008; Okpara, 2012). The banking, hospitality, power, educational, insurance, health, and transport industries experience service failures consistently (Chukwumerije, 2013; Egwukhe & Osabuchi, 2007). In a country where service infrastructures are not up to the globally accepted standard, service failure and customer dissatisfaction should be on the increase. Firms are, therefore, required to study and understand the dynamic process of the customer complaint behavior in order to remain relevant in the face of ever-increasing global competition. Before now, the Nigerian transport sector was made up of largely unorganized operators whose focus was to move as many passengers as possible from one point to another, with little or no consideration for customers' satisfaction. Customers' complaints, suggestions, and inquiries were handled unrespectfully as most drivers, bus attendants (conductors) and loading assistants were mostly touting. From the early 1990s, fairly organized operators of bus services (Shuttles and long distances) such as Associated Bus Company PLC (ABC Transport), G Agofure, Cisco, Young Shall Grow, etc. entered the road transport sector, thereby forcing the existing operators to restructure their operations. Today, the road transport sector has many organized and fairly organized private and government transport firms nationwide. Among other qualities that stand them out from other operators, these organized firms have a formal method of customer complaint handling. Transportation is one of the most critical determinants of economic development in most countries of the world. It is arguably, one of the major yardsticks in assessing and predicting the developmental progress of a country. A well coordinated and improved transportation network system is the basis for the adequate and effective movement of persons and goods within and outside the country. According to FGN (2007), Nigeria's rural transport infrastructure has been identified as a crucial component for the economic development of the country, by linking the rural communities to the urban areas. In the view of Olubomehin (2012), transportation is extremely important for the survival of the economy. An efficient transportation system in the economy is, without doubt, the lifeline needed for an uncommon sustainable development.

The road transport environment in Nigeria at the macro (national) and micro (Firm) levels makes customer complaints a regular issue. Regularly, customers are seen stranded, worried and dissatisfied over service failures of these firms in such areas as vehicle breakdown, delayed departure, trip cancellation, staff attitude, unfair charges on luggage, frustrating refund procedures and policies. These failures are complaint triggers. However, the behaviors of customers in these situations differ. In fact, the majority of these customers do not voice their complaints to a service provider (Best & Andreasen, 1977); Day & Bodur, 1978; Keaveny 1995; McCollough et al., 2000; Singh & Pandya, 1991; Stephens & Gwinner 1998). Also, the few who choose to complain adopt different approaches. Some may be assertive, others may be aggressive. Singh (1988) developed a model of customer complaint behavior which suggests that customers can respond in three ways when dissatisfaction occurs. They may take private actions, voice their complaints to the provider or take a third-party action. This view was supported by Anyanwu (2008). To Tronvoll (2008), complaint behavior that results from customers' negative impression of a service may take one of three forms: no complaint behavior, communication complaint behavior, and action complaint behavior

Best practice organizations around the world take customer complaints as one of the essential resources of their firms. They develop customer-focused strategies for recovering and handling complaints about their services, personnel, policies, as well as their complaint resolution methods. These firms also train their staff to learn, understand and categorize customer complaint behavior to ensure consistent satisfactory resolution. They recognize customer complaints as one of the indispensable tools in learning the voice of the customers and as a valuable way to learn the true quality of their products (Fornel, 2007; Liang 2009; Gask, Richard & Roy, 1995). It is sad, however, that virtually every aspect of customer complaint management is grossly neglected in most road transport firms in Nigeria. Some transport firms see customer complaint as disturbance, while others have complaint resolution procedures that are company-focused rather than customer-focused. In many occasions,

complaining customers come out of the customer service units of the organized road transport firms more dissatisfied and annoyed that they were before seeking explanations for service failures. The difficulty encountered by firms in trying to handle customer complaint is as a result of poor understanding of the dynamics of customers' complaint behaviors. The inability of the road transport firms to decipher and appreciate the different situational, individual, service/service provider and market factors that serve as serious determinants of the complaint behavior of road transport customers, makes it impossible to achieve satisfactory customer complaint resolution that can drive strong customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth promotion. Despite the strategic importance of customer reaction to dissatisfaction, the organized road transporters pay little or no attention to it, hence their inability to resolve customer complaints satisfactorily. Moreover, little exists in Nigeria on studies on consumer/ company responses to dissatisfaction in the service industry. This study aimed at assessing the nature and intensity of variables influencing the complaint behavior of customers of the organized road transport firms in Imo state using Tronvoll (2008) model of antecedents to service customers' complaint behaviors. In specific terms, the study sought to achieve the following:

1. To identify and rate the key factors influencing the compliant behavior of organized road transport customers.
2. To measure the nature of the association between key antecedents (situational variables, customers demographics, psychological variables, purchased service attributes, service-provider characteristics, and industry characteristics) and customers complaint behavior.
3. To ascertain the nature of variation in the complaint behavior of customers in different categories of the demographic factors.

The study covered consumer behavior and marketing management with major emphasis on customer complaint behaviour. The model of customer complaint behaviour reviewed is the "model of antecedents to customer complaint behavior" developed by Tronvoll Bard in 2008. The geographical scope of the study was Imo State Nigeria since most of the organized road transporters have one of their major national terminals in the state. Seven transport firms with organized service structure were involved in the study. That is, they have separate loading terminals, organized management structure, and registered business premises.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

### 2.1 Customer Complaint Behaviour: Nature and Definition

The nature and definitions of customer complaint behaviour have been extensively reviewed by many scholars such as Stanton and Fermardes (2008), Hersdiman (1970), Day and London (1977), Singh (1988), Tronvoll (2008), Day (1980), Oliver (1980), Gronroos (1988), Stephens (2000), Ozkul and Bozkurt (2006), Hoyer and Madoms (2007), Tolon and Zengin (2011) and Davidow and Dacin (1997). Tronvoll (2008) observed that customer complaint behavior is a complex construction, as such three major factors are stressed in different definitions. The definitions either describe the complaining customer's state of mind, a behavioral and or a communication act. Also, some scholars view CCB as an area of study. Defining it from this perspective, Butelle (2007) describes consumer complaint behavior as an area of research which deals with the identification and analysis of all the aspects involved in the consumer reaction to a product or service failure and the consequent perceived dissatisfaction. To Landon (1980), customer complaint behavior is an expression of dissatisfaction by individual consumers (or on a consumer's behalf) to a responsible party in either the distribution channel or a complaint handling agency. Gronroos (1988) defined customer complaint as a post-incident reaction by customers left dissatisfied after a service failure. Complaint behavior is a set of multiple behavioral and non-behavioral responses, some or all of which are triggered by perceived dissatisfaction with the purchased episode.

Defining customer complaint behaviour in view of its dynamic nature, Tronvoll (2008) sees it as a process that emerges if the service experience lies outside a customer's acceptance zone during the service interactions or in the evaluation of the service-in-use, and which (the unfavourable experience) can be explained verbally or non-verbally by the customer. Having reviewed these definitions, **customer complaint behaviour is defined in this study as the behavioral response of a customer towards a service failure experience which is aimed at reducing the extent of cognitive dissonance(feeling of regret) suffered during or after a purchase or to improve the service delivery system among others.** The complaint behaviour of a customer is shaped by many factors. These factors are described as critical incidents that trigger a complaint process (Tronvoll, 2008). The critical incident can be positive or negative. Because a service failure leads to a negative service experience, a negative critical incident is always the major trigger of customer complaint. A negative critical incident is an incident that has the potential to have an adverse effect on the customer's attitude or behaviour towards the service company, and which occurs during an unfavourable service experience (Tronvoll, 2008; Edvardson, Kangaba and Tronvoll, 2009; Edvardson, Euquest & Johnson, 2005).

In all, consumer Complaint Behaviour tries to assess the nature of reactions that customers exhibit when cognitive dissonance resulting from post-purchase dissatisfaction is experienced. Just as the degree of product satisfaction varies widely over products and individuals, complaint behavior varies widely also over situations, products, and individuals (Richins, 1982; Slama et al., 1991). However, unlike Day (1980), Singh (1988), Stephens (2000) and Hirschman (1970) who limited their explanations on the post-purchase episode, this study agrees with Tronvoll (2008) that customer complaint behavior can be exhibited during and after a purchased episode. In Nigeria, the increasing level of competition in different sectors of the economy such as telecommunications, transportation, banking, insurance, education, and even in religious activities, has made firms to begin to think about the best ways of handling, managing and resolving customer complaints in satisfactory manners.

**Customer complaint management refers to the application of management principles in handling customer complaints. It requires planning, organizing, controlling and directing of activities towards identifying, anticipating, communicating and responding to new complaints as they come.**

### *2.2 Sustainable Economic Development in Nigeria: A Case Study of the Transport Sector*

Sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to (Brundtland, 1987). It is a carefully planned set of policies and programmes geared towards managing and improving the available resources. It is a step by step action-plan of maintaining the existing infrastructure for a constant economic growth without any compromise on the future generations. Nigeria's consistent population growth and increased economic activity demand a corresponding logistical platform for social and economic development. Consequently, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN), in 1993, introduced the National Transport Policy (NTP), aimed at achieving sustainability in the transport system.

It is on record that between 1990 and 1994 the transport and allied sub-sector was appropriated 3 percent of the total National approved budget or one thousand one hundred and twelve million naira on average (World Bank, 1996). In spite of the Federal Government's huge expenditure in the transport sub-sector, its capability to robustly drive activities for economic development has remained a source of concern. Despite some encouraging milestones recorded by the introduction of this policy, the transportation sector in Nigeria has witnessed a downswing with its concomitant impact across personal and business lives in recent years. Adoption of the sustainable transport system, therefore, is the principal objective of transportation policies across nations (Maduekwe, 2002). The idea behind the policy is to strategically position the sector for consistent growth and economic development.

### *2.3 Theoretical Framework of the Study*

According to Tronvoll (2008), research on Customer Complaint Behaviour has mainly emphasized three key aspects:- motivation for complaining, antecedents to complaint behavior and types of complaint responses. This study focuses on antecedents of customer complaint behavior which is a branch of the overall customer complaint behavior. This is because most service providers with very poor and ineffective customer complaint management strategies lack an adequate understanding of the core determinants of customer compliant behavior ( Okpara and Agu,2014; Tronvoll, 2008). This is even more pronounced in the services of road transporters in Nigeria. Although Tronvoll (2008) revealed that extensive research has been conducted to expose the antecedents of customer complaint behavior, the situation is quite different in Nigeria where little or no research has been carried out in this area of customer behavior. The model developed and used by Tronvoll (2008) was adopted in this study. However, because of the peculiar nature of the Nigerian road transport environment, certain variables in his model would be excluded for easy measurement. According to Tronvoll (2008), the major antecedents of customer complaint behavior can be categorized into four. These are situational factors, individual factors, service provider/service factors and market factors. In this study, however, a six-factor antecedents model, which is an adjustment to the above model was proposed and used. Here, demographic (personal factors) and psychological factors which were captured by Tronvoll (2008) as individual factors will be separated and treated as independent variables. This supposition is in line with most Nigerian scholars' classification of influences on consumer behavior such as Agbonifoh et al. (2007), Anyanwu (2013), Okpara (2012), and Anyanwu, (1998). Again, the service provider/service factor captured jointly by Tronvoll (2008) will be treated as they are two separate variables. With these in mind, a conceptual, new model of antecedents to customer complaint behavior that has a total of six major factors with twenty-three variables was proposed.

### *2.4 Empirical Review*

For the past four decades, scholars in different countries have made attempts at exposing the influence of certain factors on customer complaint behavior. Some of the key factors thought to be predictive of propensity to complaining are summarized briefly in this study. Most scholars have developed these factors into models that have been used and criticized by many. Our empirical review would be limited to studies that paid attention to the

variables in our key- factors framework. Woodruff, Codotte, and Jenkins (1983) and Richins (1983) found a high positive relationship between greater dissatisfaction, intensity problem severity (magnitude of failure), cost of complaining and likelihood of complaint. Gronhuag and Zaltman (1981) observed that access to time, money and power (resource model), experience and training of customer (Learning model) as well as self-confidence and aggressiveness (personality model) were correlates of customer complaint behavior. To Robert (1955), past success with complaining in the similar situation, resources, the perception of low benefits or cost ratio, marketing representatives' behavior and nature of dissatisfaction would influence customer complaint behavior. Again, complaint behavior may be triggered when the promise from the service provider (Gronroos, 2007) or the value proposition (Vargo and Lusch, 2004) is inconsistent with the customer's acceptance zone of the overall service experience. Company image and communication claims may evoke a complaint behavior (Parasuraman et al., 1985; Gronroos, 1988).

As evidenced in our framework, the variables in the situational factors have been used by Bolting (1989), Singh and Walker (1996), Richins and Verhage (1985), Ostrom and Iacabuce (1995), as well as Webster and Suideram (1998). They found a positive relationship between situational factors and customer complaint behavior. The demographic variables have been used by Tolon and Zengin (2011), Tronvoll (2007, 2008), Reynolds and Harris (2005). Their studies indicate that there is a significant relationship between occupation and complaint behavior, with people who have managerial and professional occupational status being the most complainers (Tronvoll, 2007, 2008; Liefeld 1975; Tolon and Zengin, 2011; Reynolds and Harris, 2005).

On age, Phan and Baird (2008) revealed that there is a positive relationship between age and complaining behavior, while the reverse is the case in the studies of Tronvoll (2007), Hakimah et al. (2010), Ngai et al. (2007), Grongiou and Pettigrew (2009). Williams (2002), Tolon and Zengin (2011), Tronvoll (2008) and many other scholars as shown in table 2.2 reported a positive association between level of education and customer complaint behavior. That is, people with higher educational complain higher than people with a lower educational background. However, Phan and Baird (2008) contradicted this assertion by stating that people who have high education are less likely to complain than those with lower education qualification.

On the issues of gender, Liefeld et al. (1975) disclosed a no different result between the actual and expected rate of complaining between the sexes. However, Heung and Lam (2003) and Kan et al. (1995) found females to complain more than males, while Ngai et al. (2007) suggest that males are more likely to complain since they would want to get things straight. Also, Rogers and Williams (1990), Bearden and Oliver (1985), Day (1984), Singh and Wilkes (1996) and Volkor et al. (2002) found a positive relationship between psychological factors and customer complaint behavior. Service provider characteristics, service factors, and market conditions equally affect complaint behavior (Blodgett and Granbois, 1992; Zeithaml et al., 2007; Oster, 1980; Kolodinsky, 1995; Tronvoll, 2007, 2008; Singh, 1991).

### **3. Research Methodology**

As a result of the nature of this study, the survey research design was adopted. Relevant data for this study were gathered from the primary and secondary sources with the questionnaire serving as the key instrument. Copies of the questionnaire were administered face-to-face by the researchers with the aid of thoroughly trained research assistants drawn from the postgraduate and final year students of the department of marketing. The study population consisted of the customers of registered transport firms in Imo State Nigeria. However, the sample frame was limited to the category of transport firms classified by the researcher as "organized". These firms have clearly defined management structure, trained and regular staff members, over fifty modern buses, registered business premises or terminals, clearly defined vision and mission statements in their transport business activities, and formal or informal approaches to customers' complaints handling. Appendix 1 contains the list of firms that met these criteria. To arrive at the appropriate sample size, the researchers used the average daily passenger traffic (ADPT) of the firms for all routes plied in the month of March 2014. Using this figure (2621) as the study population determined, the Taro Yamane formula (Yamane, 1967 quoted by Botes, 2009; Alugbuo, 2005) with a confidence level of 95% was applied, hence a sample size of 384. The quantitative data generated in this study were tested using the Ordinary Least Square (OLS) involving the Ordinal Multiple Regression Analysis and paired samples t-test of difference at 0.05 level of significance using SPSS version 20.

### **4. Results and Discussion of Findings**

#### *4.1 Situational factors and Customer Complaint Behaviour*

The situational factors are factors surrounding the transaction environment. These factors may vary from firm to firm, from customer to customer or from industry to industry in the same economy depending on the customer's individual assessment of the transaction circumstances or the environment. According to Tronvoll (2008), these

are the factors that assume that a dissatisfied customer objectively evaluates the extent of the service failure, the cost, and benefit of complaining, the likelihood of successful complaining, and criticality or seriousness of service failure. Our study revealed that situational factors impact significantly on Customer Complaint Behaviour. This is in line with the findings of these researchers cited above. However, the study further revealed that the cost of complaining and criticality or seriousness of service failure are positively correlated with Customer Complaint Behaviour and that they have a significant influence on Customer Complaint Behaviour. On the other hand, it was revealed that the likelihood of successful complaining and perceived benefits of complaining are negatively correlated with Customers' Complaint Behaviour. This contradicts the assertion of Wordruff et al. (1983) on the likelihood of successful complaining, Robert (1955) and Tronvoll (2008) on benefit and successful complaining.

#### *4.2 Demographic Factors and Customer Complaint Behaviour*

The demographic variables are perceivable, external individual attributes that define an individual, which also drive or restrain such a person from certain behaviors when dissatisfaction is experienced. Our study revealed that customers' demographic characteristics have a significant impact on their complaint behavior. This is in line with the findings of Tolon and Zengin (2010), Tronvoll (2007, 2008), and Reynolds and Harris (2005). However, the study shows that age, occupation, level of education and stage of life cycle of customers are significant correlates of customers' complaint behavior. This is in line with the findings of Tronvoll (2007, 2008), Liefeld (1975), Phan and Baird (2008), Hakimah et al. (2010), Ngai et al. (2007), Grongion and Pettiogrew (2009) and Williams (2002). Again, the study shows that gender is not a significant predictor of customer complaint behavior. This is in line with the assertion of Liefeld et al. (1975) but against the findings of Heung and Lam (2003), Kan et al. (1995) and Ngai et al. (2007).

Meanwhile, an examination of the complaint intention of customers of different categories in each of the demographic factors contained in the questionnaire shows that in any service failure encounter, male customers are more likely to complain than their female counterparts. This is in line with the findings of Ngai, et al. (2007). Also, there is no significant variation in the complaint behavior of male and female customers. Again, customers of youthful age are more likely to complain than older customers. This is in line with the findings of (Hakimah et al., 2010, Tronvoll, 2007). However, there is no significant variation in the complaint behavior of customers of different age brackets. Our study disclosed that customers who are married are more likely to complain, while customers who are widowed are less likely to complain about any service failure encounter. Above all, there is a significant variation in the complaint behavior of customers in different marital categories. This is in line with the finding of Tronvoll (2007).

Our findings equally revealed that customers who possess higher degrees are more likely to complain than customers who possess lower degrees or certificates. Again, there is a significant positive variation in the complaint behaviors of customers with different educational qualification. This is in line with the findings of (Reynolds and Harris, 2005, Phau and Baird, 2008, Tronvoll, 2007). It was also discovered that customers who are unemployed are more likely to complain than customers who are employed. This is in line with the findings of (Liefeld et.al, 1975, Williams, 2002, Reynolds & Harris, 2005). However, there is no significant variation in the complaint behavior of customers of different employment statuses.

#### *4.3 Psychological Factors and Customer Complaint Behaviour*

Psychological factors are internal, individual attributes that define an individual and also influence one's behavior towards service failure experience. The psychological factors reviewed and analyzed in this study are the customers' attitude, lifestyle as influenced by perception and personality. Our study shows that customers' psychological factors have a significant positive relationship with their complaint behavior. It revealed that all the variables (attitude towards complaining, personality and customers' perception of the cause of service failure) are positively correlated with customer complaint behavior. This agrees with the findings of Rogers and Williams (1990), Bearden and Oliver (1985), Day (1984), Singh and Wikis (1996) and Volker et al. (2002) which disclosed that a positive relationship exists between psychological factors and customer complaint behavior.

#### *4.4 Purchased-Service Factors and Customer Complaint Behaviour*

These are factors that define an organization in terms of its physical outlook, managerial and marketing strategies. The variables analyzed here were the firms' reputation, firms' responsiveness to service failure, ownership structure, size and initial (advertising) claims of the firms. Our findings show that service provider characteristics have a significant impact on customer complaint behavior. This agrees with the findings of Day and Landon (1977), Bearden and Mason (1984), Granbois et al. (1977), Bolfing (1989), Jacoby and Jerrard (1981), Richins (1983), Zeithaml et al. (1988) and Oster (1980). However, the study revealed that reputation of firm, responsiveness, ownership, and claims are positively correlated with customer complaint behavior. On the other hand, our study

shows that the size of the company is not a significant predictor of customer complaint behavior. This contradicts the key finding of Oster (1980).

#### *4.5 Industry Characteristics and Customer Complaint Behaviour*

The construct pictured the nature of the transport industry in Imo State where the study was conducted. Two variables were listed here. These are nature of competition and the extent of government regulation. Our study shows that the industry condition has a significant impact on customer complaint behavior. That is, the degree of market competitiveness and the extent of government regulation impact significantly on customer complaint behavior, hence, they are significant predictors. This corresponds with the findings of Andreason (1985), Hirschman (1970), Tronvoll (2007), Singh (1991) and Kolodinsky (1995).

### **5. Conclusion**

Customer Complaint Behaviour has remained a mystery to many organizations. As an aspect of the general consumer behavior study, Customer Complaint Behaviour demands careful attention and analytical approach so as to demystify its nature for effective management. This study paid attention to the “antecedents” aspect of Customer Complaint Behaviour. The general antecedents of Customer Complaint Behaviour were condensed into six factors made up of twenty-three variables. To achieve satisfactory resolution of customer complaints, an understanding of the antecedents to customer complaint behavior is imperative. Since the rate of service failure in the Nigerian road transport sector has remained high, largely due to macro and microenvironmental, infrastructural and personal issues, there is the need to proactively prepare for customer complaint management). To serve customers correctly and prevent unfavorable service experience that may jeopardize the competitive position of an organization, learning about the customers’ complaint behavior process becomes imperative especially in the Nigerian road transport sector where new competitive strategies that are customer-focused have begun to emanate. Customer complaint behavior is a very vast area of a marketing study that covers the cause-process- effect segments. This study covered the cause angle to identify the key antecedents of customer complaint behavior.

### **6. Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are hereby made:

- 1) Road transport operators are encouraged to adopt our new model in training and retraining their staff on the nature of customer complaint behavior. It is only when the core antecedents to a complaining customer’s behavior are well understood that satisfactory resolutions can be proffered. The training package should emphasize the value of customer complaints to the success and competitive position of the firm. It should also aim at developing in the staff; problem resolution skills, good listening skills, communication skills and ability to show empathy and commitment towards resolving customer complaints.
- 2) In order to maintain their positioning strategies already existing in the minds of the customers, the organized road transporters are advised to pay critical attention to the five identified major areas of service failure (unfriendly and poor staff attitude towards customers, delayed departure, over-loading, high fare and over-speeding) as well as customers’ major reasons for preferring the organized road transporters to the open-market, road-side transporters. (convenience or comfort, management style, reliability, fare system customer service quality). As earlier noted, best practice organizations try to encourage customers to complain whenever there is a reason to complain. To generate more complaints that will aid corporate decision-making, efforts should be made to make the complaint lodging procedure stress-free. This is because monetary and time costs are barriers to customer complaint lodging.
- 3) The road transport segment occupies a very sensitive position in Nigeria’s economy, being the highest contributor to GDP from the transport sector over the years. Government is hereby advised to develop a regulatory framework that will monitor and regulate the service quality of road transporters, vis-à-vis their initial claims or promises to customers. Again, the government at all levels should show a serious commitment to road network rehabilitation and construction as most road networks in Nigeria are largely unmotorable.
- 4) There is an urgent need for state governments to overhaul their transport firms. These firms such as ITC, Abia Line, Tracks, etc in the South East are known for the use of old, weak and poorly maintained vehicles for their shuttle customers. The management style, which negates the principle of the marketing concept, is a competitive disadvantage to the firms. Customer satisfaction, complaints, and comfort are rarely considered in these firms. The trend of competition in the road transport segment may have a very adverse impact on these firms in the near future.
- 5) Above all, the study has developed a unique, universal model of critical antecedents to customer complaint behavior in organized road transport firms. The model shows the antecedents (variables) that constitute the

constructs, indicating those that have a significant impact or weak impact on customer complaint behavior. It also shows that a dissatisfied, complaining customer observes one or more of the three behavioral responses. The customer may take a private action, public action or no action at all. The response behaviors are greatly influenced by the antecedents.

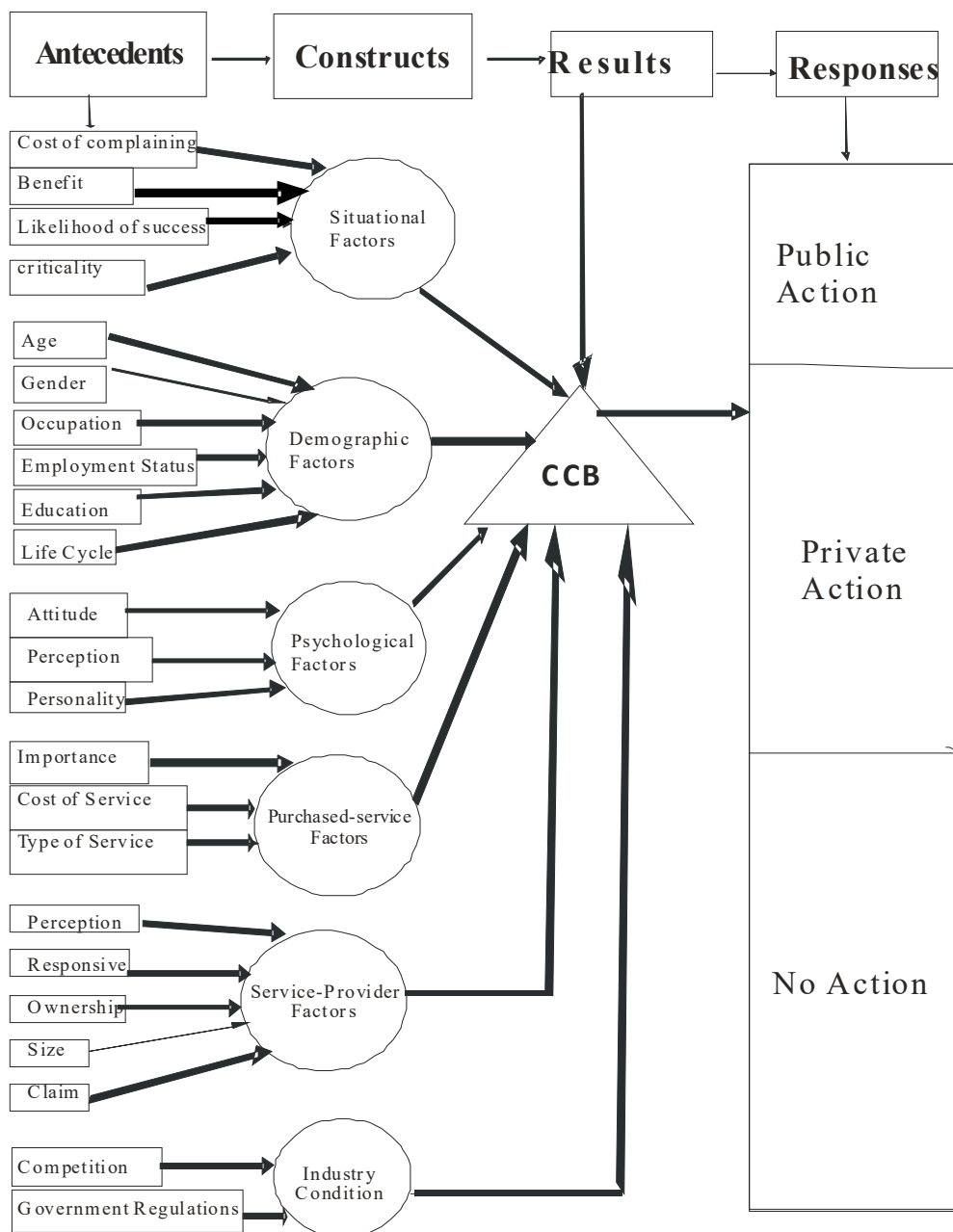


Figure 1. Proposed Model of Antecedents to Customer Complaint Behavior

Source: Researchers' Proposition, 2014.

**Note:** —————> = Weak Impact; —————> = Significant Impact

### 7. The Relevance of the Study and Gaps Filled

- 1) A look at the empirical review shows at a glance that little or no studies have been conducted in the Nigerian context and on the road transport sector. It is this gap that the study intends to close thereby broadening the existing literature and empirical studies in this area of customer behavior. The study will also add to the existing models of customer complaint behavior by proposing the six-factor model at the end of the field research. Reviewed literature revealed that no empirical study exists in Nigeria on this all-important area of



marketing theory and practice. This study remains a hallmark of intellectual exercise and a landmark in this aspect of consumer behavior in Nigeria and the country's road transport sector.

- 2) The originator of our adopted model, Professor Tronvoll Bard applied the variables in a monopolistic market where the exit is closed. This study adopted a reversed approach, studying a sector in Nigeria that is highly competitive; affording customers many alternative brands. This implies that the study is of international relevance, being unique in focus, scope, and choice of target respondents.
- 3) Again, the Nigerian road transport sector is made up of firms that were originally "touting structured". Before now, road transporters used more of touts than educated, customer-friendly staff in their daily business operations. The changing structure of the Nigerian population which has more educated, informed and socially up-to-date customers who know their rights and are ready to go for it, call for a strategic re-think. The touting system was an obscure system that was marketing malpractice-prone and where the interest, complaints, and power (rights) of the customer were suppressed by touts who were ready to insult and assault customers to make sales. The Nigerian road transportation culture has changed as customers can now speak out and insist on their rights. This study is a guide and direction to transport firms wishing to restructure their operations to fit into the new, customer-friendly era of road transportation marketing in Nigeria.
- 4) For firms that have existing customer complaint handling systems, understanding the key antecedents to a customer complaint is critical for the provision of satisfactory complaint resolution. This study has revealed key variables that may be used to understand the customer's complaint behavior for better resolution.

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**Appendixes**

Table 1. Ordinal Multiple Regression Results

S/N	Construct	R <sup>2</sup>	P-Value
1	Situational	0.990	0.021
2	Demographics	0.970	0.037
3	Psychological	0.988	0.034
4	Purchased-Service	0.973	0.026
5	Service-Provider	0.860	0.041
6	Industry Condition	0.805	0.036

Table 2. Distribution and Retrieval of Instrument

Transport Firms	ADPT	Copies Issued	Copies Retrieved	Copies Lost	Copies Used	Percentage Used
ABC	512	68	61	7	59	19.34
ITC	902	120	98	22	98	32.13
The Young	344	46	43	3	43	14.09
Chisco	264	35	35	0	35	11.48
Best Way	93	12	12	0	12	3.93
Peace Mass	470	62	54	8	54	17.70
God is Good	36	5	5	0	4	1.31
Total	2621	348	308 (89%)	40 (11%)	305 (%)	100.00

Source: Field survey, 2018.

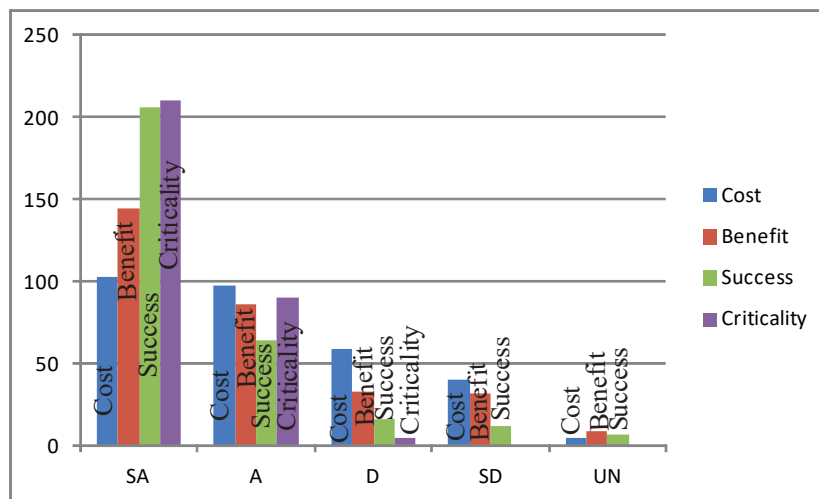


Figure 2. Multiple bar chart showing effect of situational factors on CCB

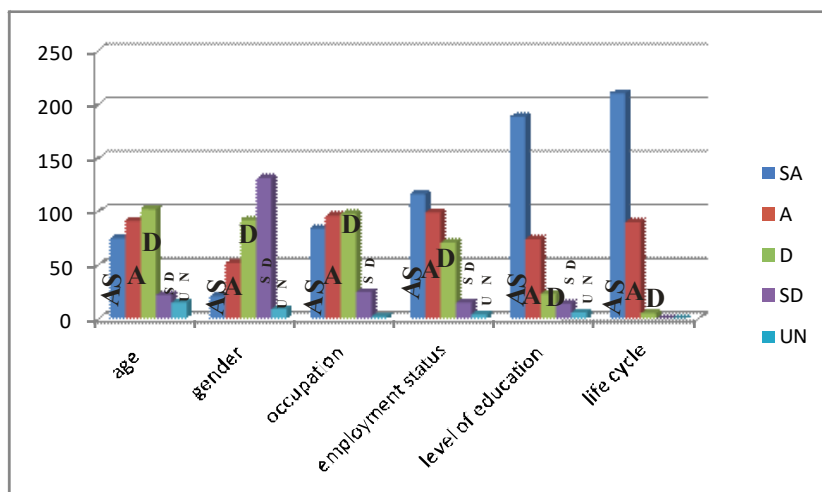


Figure 3. Multiple bar chart showing effect of demographic factors on CCB

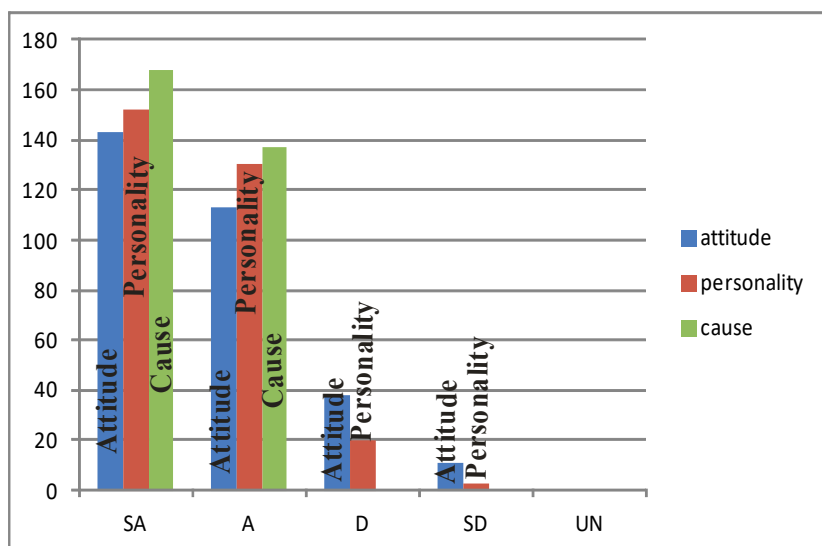


Figure 4. Multiple bar chart showing effect of psychological factors on CCB

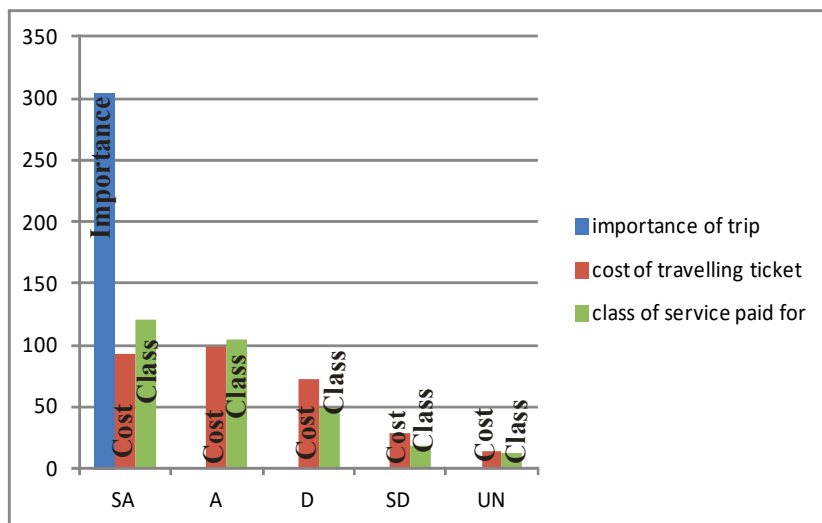


Figure 5. Multiple bar chart showing effect of service attributes factors on CCB

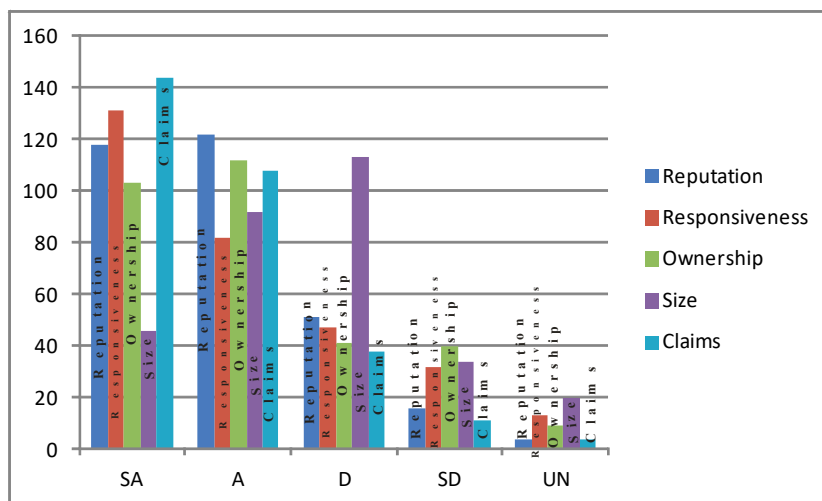


Figure 6. Multiple bar chart showing effect of service-provider characteristics on CCB

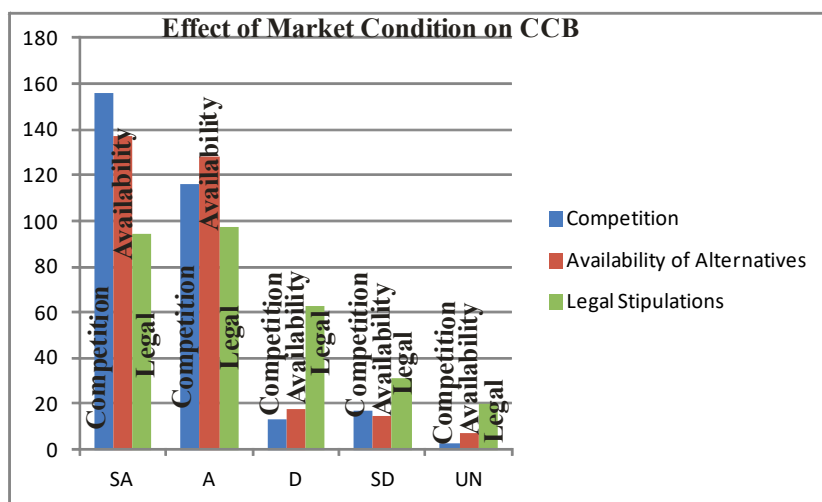


Figure 7. Multiple bar chart showing effect of industry condition on CCB

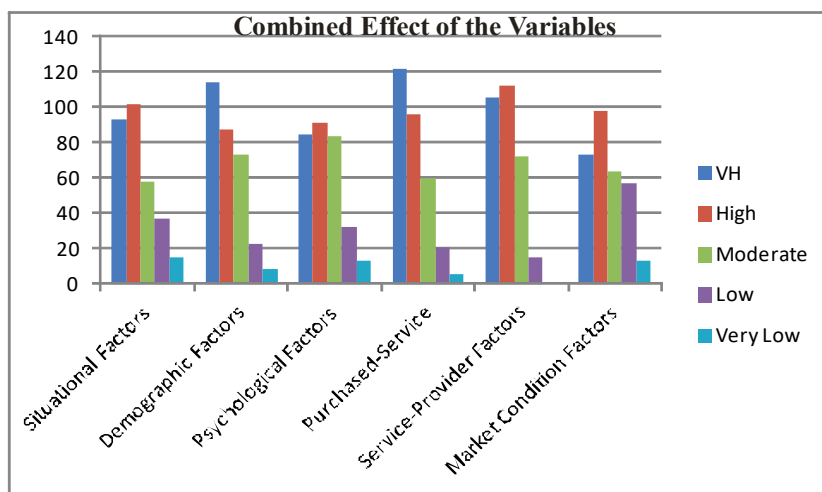


Figure 8. Multiple Bar Chart Showing the Combined Effect of the Variables

Table 3. Complaint Behaviour of Customers in Different Demographic Categories

<b>Demographic Factors</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Complained</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Do not complain</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	137	83.54	27	16.46	164
	Female	103	73.05	38	26.95	141
<b>Age</b>	18 – 25	57	79.17	15	20.83	72
	26 – 35	60	80.00	15	20.00	75
	36 – 45	58	84.06	11	15.94	69
	46 – 55	38	70.37	16	29.63	54
	56 and above	27	77.14	18	22.86	35
<b>Marital status</b>	Married	156	82.98	32	17.02	188
	Single	80	76.19	25	23.81	105
	Widowed	4	33.33	8	66.67	12
<b>Educational Qualification</b>	O'Level	26	39.39	40	60.61	66
	ND/NCE	38	79.17	10	20.83	48
	B.Sc/HND	91	89.22	11	10.78	102
	Masters	69	94.52	4	5.48	73
	Ph.D.	16	100.00	0	0.00	16
<b>Employment status</b>	Employed	175	79.55	45	20.45	220
	Student	51	73.91	18	26.09	69
	Unemployed	14	87.50	2	12.50	16

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

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