

Analysis of the Determinants of Business Tourists Choice of Public Road Transportation Firms in Minna, Nigeria

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The last one decade witnessed a sprung up of many public road transport firms in Minna in Nigeria, each providing range of services to attract travellers so as to remain in the market sustainably. These firms are enjoying varying patronage from a wide market segment particularly from business tourists whose reasons for selection of a specific firm for trips are academically undocumented and not segmented. Thus, the main objective of this research is to explore the determinants of domestic business tourists' choice of public road transportation firms and segment them. An exploratory mixed method research design was used in which a qualitative data through 10 interviews was firstly collected, then followed by a quantitative data collection through the administration of 208 questionnaires in the premises of six public transportation firms in Minna, Nigeria. Thematic analysis and cluster analysis in SPSS 22 were performed, and the study found out that the main determinants of business tourists' choice of road transport firms are: palpability, reliability, receptivity, safety, compassion, affordability and normative influence. Based on these factors, two distinct segments of business tourists were discovered namely: patronage assured and revisit uncertain business tourists.

Keywords: Segmentation, Business tourists, Road transport, Firms selection; Nigeria.

Introduction

Business travels often referred to the travelling of people for commitments that are associated with their business or work has in the last decades been considered as one of the major contributors of the socio-economic development of many cities and countries all over the world (Dwyer, *et al.*, 2000; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2001; Oh, 2005; Pablo-Romero & Molina, 2013). As noted by Doyle and Nathan (2001), previous decades have experienced considerable upsurge in business travel by tourists all over the world and this is prevalent among professional, entrepreneurs and managers of organizations. According to Aguilera (2008) and Beaverstock *et al.* (2009), the unprecedented globalization and expansion of markets geographically, increase in the number of different companies, innovative administrative trends which include

outsourcing and advance networking and improvement in infrastructures to enhance mobility are pertinent factors that have influenced this development. These factors have led to a rising demand for communication and dealings between individuals who work in different locations in a particular organization, and those who serve in different enterprises.

The World Travel and Tourism Council (2016) statistics have shown that business travel is a vital industry globally that cannot overlooked as its recorded a significant 23.4% of direct Travel and Tourism GDP in 2015 (USD 1, 106.9 billion) second to leisure travels, and its projected to grow by 3.9% in 2016 to USD 1,149.9 billion, and rise by 3.7% per annum to USD 1,658.8bn in 2026. The travel and tourism competitiveness index

(2015) have it that the Nigerian environment has high cost of doing business and the quality of its air; railroad and road infrastructure is substandard. Nonetheless, Nigeria has witnessed an increase in domestic travels by road compared to other modes of transportation. This is evident in the manner business tourists use public road transport as a means of reaching their business destinations. As a result of this demand, several road transportation firms have sprung up in Nigeria to take advantage of the economy of the huge market; each providing varied offers to attract passengers.

Nowadays, business tourists are becoming more complex, more informed, more demanding, and thus, the necessity of knowing how and why they choose the road transport firm with which to travel becomes very crucial. It will be tactically important to know the factors influencing their decision to travel with the road transport firms. Thus, this study contributes to the literature both theoretically and methodologically in three folds. Firstly, it represents one of the first attempt at exploring determinants of domestic business tourists choice of public road transportation firms as the literature has been dominated with studies on travellers modal choice. Secondly, there appears to be a paucity of research segmenting factors influencing the selection of road transportation firms. Thirdly, this research is a departure from the usual qualitative and quantitative methodological approach in investigating travellers transport selection behaviour, and employed a sequential exploratory mixed method research design in conducting it. Against this background, the main objective of this research is to explore the determinants of domestic business tourists' choice of public road transportation firms with a view to carry out segmentation.

Literature Review

Travellers Public Transport Selection Behaviour

In the literature, research on travellers public transport selection behaviour have largely focus on travellers transport mode choice (Clauss & Döppe, 2016; Hergesell & Dickinger, 2013; Yang *et al.*, 2015) and travel agency selection (Heung & Zhu, 2005; ENg, Cassidy & Brown, 2006) to the neglect of study on business travellers and tourists road transport firm selection behaviour worldwide and developing countries in particular. A few studies on travellers' transport firm selection is on airlines which were mostly conducted in developed countries and developing Asian countries. Traveller's decision-making process is influenced by some factors and as noted by Park *et al.* (2004), the main variables usually considered when modelling it are service perception and expectation, service value, and traveller's satisfaction. Customarily these service constructs have been used to predict consumer choice in the full-service airline environment (Fourie & Lubbe, 2016).

Study on holiday travel choices has shown that transport mode choice is one of the numbers of travel decisions which are somehow interrelated (Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002). The price element of mode choice is classified into mode specific costs which covers rebate for public transportation, parking and toll charges for car use (Hensher *et al.*, 2005). Hensher *et al.* (2005) and Louviere *et al.* (2000) opined that the time dimension is usually punctuality of service, frequency of service and departure times while convenience dimension are ease of access and comfort using a specific transport mode (Hatzinger & Mazanec, 2007).

In terms of travellers' selection of travel agencies, very few studies have investigated this phenomenon. Prominent among these studies are the work of Heung and Zhu (2005) and Ku and Fan (2009). An

exploration of the factors affecting Shanghai residents' selection of a travel agency for domestic tours indicates that "tour security and safety" was the main attribute in the selection of a travel agency. This was followed by "Credibility of the travel agency" and "Agency reputation" (Heung & Zhu, 2005). The emergence of Internet-based distribution channels has created both opportunities for and challenges to the travel agencies. Ku and Fan (2009) found that privacy, safety, and product quality were the three most important factors influencing customer purchases of room products on the Internet through travel agencies.

Market Segmentation in Travel and Tourism Research

Segmentation entails dealing with a dissimilar market as component of smaller, more similar markets (Kotler, Bowen, & Makens, 2010). According to Mok and Iverson (2000), segmentation is based on the notion that a market is comprised of many subgroups of individuals and each of these subgroups has specifics as well as different desires and motivation for examining service quality provided by a given provider, since it is pertinent to bring into line rendered service quality and its expectations. As noted by Dolnicar (2008) and Kotler *et al.* (2010), different tourists' needs and physiognomies which often guide stakeholders in the tourism, hospitality and other service industries to understand travellers' desire more exactly can be used in distinguishing these smaller markets. Kotler *et al.* (2010) further opined that for the creation of smaller subgroups to be useful administratively, each of them needs to be reachable, quantifiable, actionable, and considerable.

Park and Yoon (2009), Prayag and Hosany (2014) and Prayag *et al.* (2015) all acknowledge that in destination marketing literature, traveller's segmentation based on many latent constructs, has gained considerable academic attention. In the service industry literature, particularly in tourism and hospitality domain, benefit

segmentation approach appears to have received much utilization in addition to the extensively used demographic based segmentation approach (Sarigollu & Huang, 2005). Haley (1968) was the first to champion and initiate the use of benefit segmentation and this was based on the argument that customary descriptive variables based market segmentation approach do not have the ability to accurately classify market segments but benefit segmentation does because its more powerful owing to its underlying structure which describe the benefits people look for in patronizing any product. Therefore, categorizing travellers on the basis of the benefits they look out for from their travel experience is much more likely to predict segments that are important in providing information on travel behaviour and destination choice (Frochot & Morrison, 2000).

Moreover, Frochot & Morrison, (2000) stated that in tourism management, benefit segmentation has been applied to four different areas which include events, facilities and attractions, investigating traveller decision making processes, targeting particular markets, tourists' destination marketing (Prayag *et al.*, 2015). Despite that benefit segmentation has been extensively researched in tourism and hospitality sector and applied across many dissimilar destinations, the use of the methodology for determinants of domestic business tourists' public road transportation firms' selection decisions is somewhat scarce in the literature.

Methodology

Sequential exploratory mixed methods research design with instrument development was used for this study. Thus, qualitative data was first collected, then followed by quantitative data collection. For qualitative data collection, interviews were conducted with ten (10) business tourists who are in Minna town from other part of Nigeria for business purposes, and have spent at least one

night. They were purposively selected from six public road transportation firms in Minna, Nigeria namely: Niger State Transportation Authority (N.S.T.A), First Tarzan Motor Limited, Peace Transportation, Nice Travel, Ibada Transport, and Abia Line. As opined by Teddlie and Yu (2007) and Kumar (2006), the main consideration in purposive sampling is to select people who are likely to have the required information and are willing to share it. The interviews were conducted at the premise of the transportation firms and they were for a duration of 15 to 22 minutes. All interviews were recorded with the aid of a digital recorder with the consent of the interviewees as suggested by Matthews and Ross (2010).

The interviews were transcribed verbatim with the aid of Dragon Naturally Speaking 12.5 software, and thereafter the analysis of the transcript led to the generation of themes from where an instrument (questionnaire) was developed for the quantitative aspect of data collection. The initial questionnaire that was developed which has seven (7) constructs each with seven items as observed variables was pilot tested for reliability content wise and statistically. They were given to four experts in tourism and hospitality industry in order to ensure that items are directly related to the constructs and provide a good measure of each of them. The final questionnaire then contained thirty (30) items measuring the determinants of business tourists' choice of public road transportation firms. It also comprised of two sections with the first part having questions on socio demographic characteristics of business tourists and the second section having items measuring the seven constructs. All the items in the second section were evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale ("1" strongly disagree, "5" strongly agree).

For the final survey to gather quantitative data, eighty (80) questionnaires were administered to business tourists in each of

the six road transportation firms. They were given to them during their waiting period before boarding for final departure to their destination with the aid of one research assistant. Since not all travellers using the transportation firms are business tourists, in order to ensure that the questionnaires were given to the intended target, travellers were asked if they were travelling for business and also whether they have spent a night or more in Minna town. Those that indicated travelling for business purpose and spent at least a night were selected using nonprobability convenience sampling technique. Out of the four hundred and eighty (480) questionnaires administered, only 208 was filled and taken from the respondent; yielding a return rate of 43.33%. The relatively low response rate is due to the nature of behaviour of travellers in Nigeria who are always in a hurry to leave to their destination. However, the returned questionnaires were sufficient for analysis since the study is exploratory.

Data were analysed using a three steps procedure. Firstly, the qualitative aspect of the analysis was carried out using the transcribed interviews. The transcript was analysed thematically to generate themes that described the determinants of business tourists' choice of road transportation firms. Secondly, exploratory factor analysis which examined the underlying dimensions of determinants of transport firms' selection was conducted. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with a varimax rotation was applied with predetermined Eigenvalues above one. Only observed variables with factor loadings equal or above 0.5 were retained in each factor. Lastly, a two-step cluster analysis was conducted to segment the sample into homogeneous cluster group.

Results and Discussion

Qualitative Findings

Thematic analysis of interview transcript resulted in the emergence of seven themes which accounts for the variation in the behaviour of domestic business tourists in the

choice of road transportation firms in Minna, Nigeria. These themes are: Palpability, Reliability, Receptivity, Safety, Compassion,

Affordability and Normative Influence. They are presented in table 1 with the associated comments of interviewees.

Table 1. Themes and Associated Comments of Interviewees

S/No	Final Theme	Emerging Themes	Interviewee Comments
1	Palpability (Construct 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neat Vehicles • Promptness • Staff Appearance 	<p>"You can see their vehicles, very clean and new (Interviewee 6)".</p> <p>"I told you one of the reasons why I patronize them is their time schedule... I prefer using them because they keep to their time (Interviewee 10)".</p> <p>"The staff are neatly dressed in their private wears and their vehicles are new and that's why I like using this company (Interviewee 7)".</p>
2	Reliability (Construct 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comfortable • Convenience • Reliable • Available 	<p>"To some extent their services are good and reliable (Interviewee 1)".</p> <p>"Their services to me are okay, no stress compared to other transport vehicles; comfort is assured than in other transportation firm... it's also convenient (Interviewee 2)".</p> <p>"Because of the nature of my business, you know that my goods are bulky, so I prefer to use this company... their service is Ok, they render services to me any time I want them (Interviewee 9)".</p>
3	Receptivity (Construct 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well Organize • Welcoming • Patience • Maturity 	<p>"I like the way they organize things, they are just organized, that's just why I love their services, very organize (Interviewee 3)".</p> <p>"Their services are very ok, I think they are well organized, their staff are organized and welcoming (Interviewee 8)".</p> <p>"I just like the firm based on the way they structure their activities and services (Interviewee10)".</p>
4	Safety (Construct 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security of properties and risky • Safety and protection 	<p>"Here, I think the safety is guaranty, then protection as well (Interviewee 2)".</p> <p>"If any of my property miss, I know I will come back and take it... their drivers are also professionals too (Interviewee 1)".</p>
5	Compassion (Construct 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caring • Tolerance • Attentive service 	<p>"I patronize this transport firm because they have tolerance (Interviewee 4)".</p> <p>"Even the workers of this firm have manner of approach, they know how to treat their customers. Always listen to their customers at the times of complains (Interviewee 5)".</p> <p>"In fact, the staff here treat people very good and fine (Interviewee 10)".</p>
6	Affordability (Construct 6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonable Fare 	<p>"The fare here is quite stable even if the price of fuel increases (Interviewee 1)".</p> <p>"Their services are Ok to me because the fare i paid is less than what they charge in other road transportation firm (Interviewee 2)".</p>
7	Normative Influence (Construct 7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence of friends • Influence of parents 	<p>"My father has been using this company and he did not complain about their services and this is the one of the oldest road transportation firm in Minna (Interviewee 9)".</p>

Quantitative Findings

Principal Components Analysis

Exploratory factor analysis conducted using principal component analysis with varimax rotation on the 30 items on the research instrument led to generation of factor loadings with different values. After series of

run with a fixed number of factors, precisely seven (7) factors, there were some deletions of items lower than 0.5 loading and the final run that gave a neat pattern matrix accounted for 63.99% of the total variance. A Kaiser–Mayer–Olkin measure yielded 0.85, implying that the sample used for data

collection was very adequate for conducting factor analysis. Cronbach's alpha reliability scores of the seven (7) determinants of business tourists' choice of road transportation firms ranged from 0.591 to 0.747 connoting that there exist an acceptable internal consistency in the items measuring each of the latent constructs (Hair et al., 1998).

Segment Identification

A two-step cluster analysis conducted using log-likelihood distance measure and automatic segment determination result into the creation of two distinct clusters identified as cluster membership variable 1 and 2. Figure 1 shows size of each of the two clusters in percentage. Cluster 1 is largest cluster with 108 business tourists occupying 51.9% and cluster 2 is the smallest cluster; slightly lower than cluster 1 in size and it occupied 48.1%, which is associated with 100 business tourists. The ratio of size of the largest cluster to the smallest cluster is 1.08 and it is within the acceptable threshold of 2 or 3. Figure 2 shows the relative importance of the latent constructs in contributing to the creation of the two clusters. Palpability, safety and reliability contributed more in the

formation of the two clusters while compassion and normative influence had the lowest effect in cluster creation.

Patronage Assured Business Tourists

Figure 3 represents business tourists' relative agreements with the indicators of the latent constructs (cluster 1). By this figure, 59.1% of business tourists somehow agree with the determinants of choice of transportation firms in Minna town, Nigeria. Specifically, business tourists agree highly with palpability and reasonably with safety construct. They seem to also highly agree with reliability and receptivity constructs as determinants of their choice of road transport firm and fairly agree affordability, compassion and normative influence as the basis for selecting road transportation firms for their trips in and outside Minna. The foregoing narration at best describe cluster 1 as "Patronage Assured Business Tourists" who are more likely to continue to patronize the examined road transport firms in Minna as they have some level of satisfaction with service offerings provided by the transportation firms.

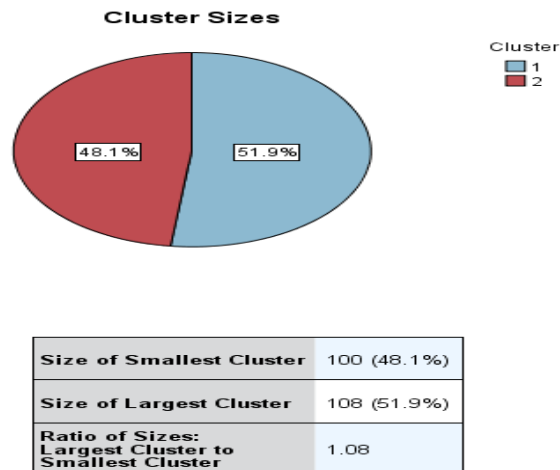


Figure 1 Size of each of the two clusters in percentage

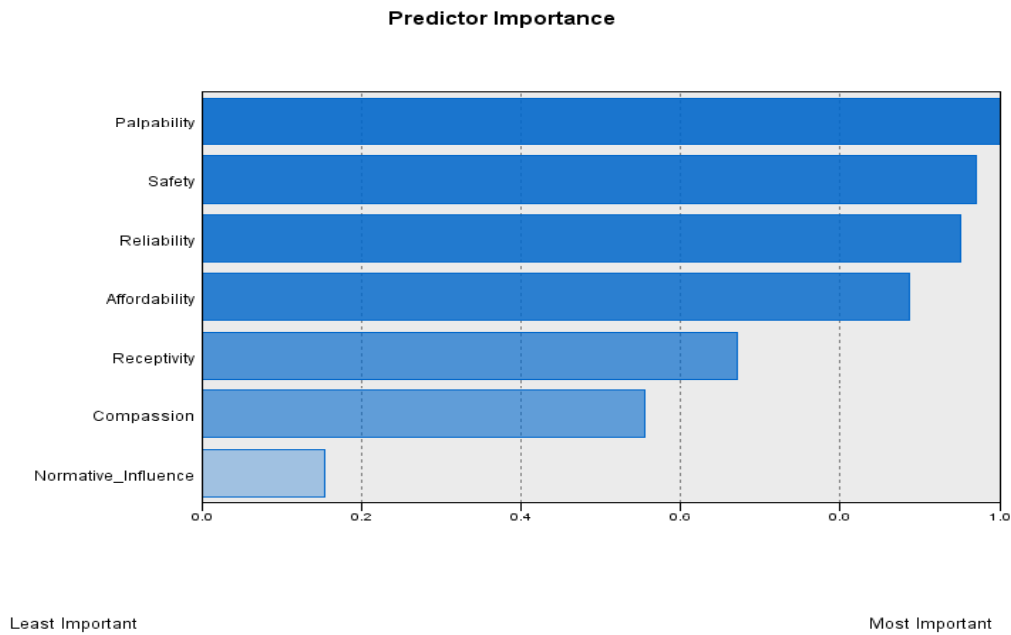


Figure 2 shows the contribution of the latent constructs in cluster formation

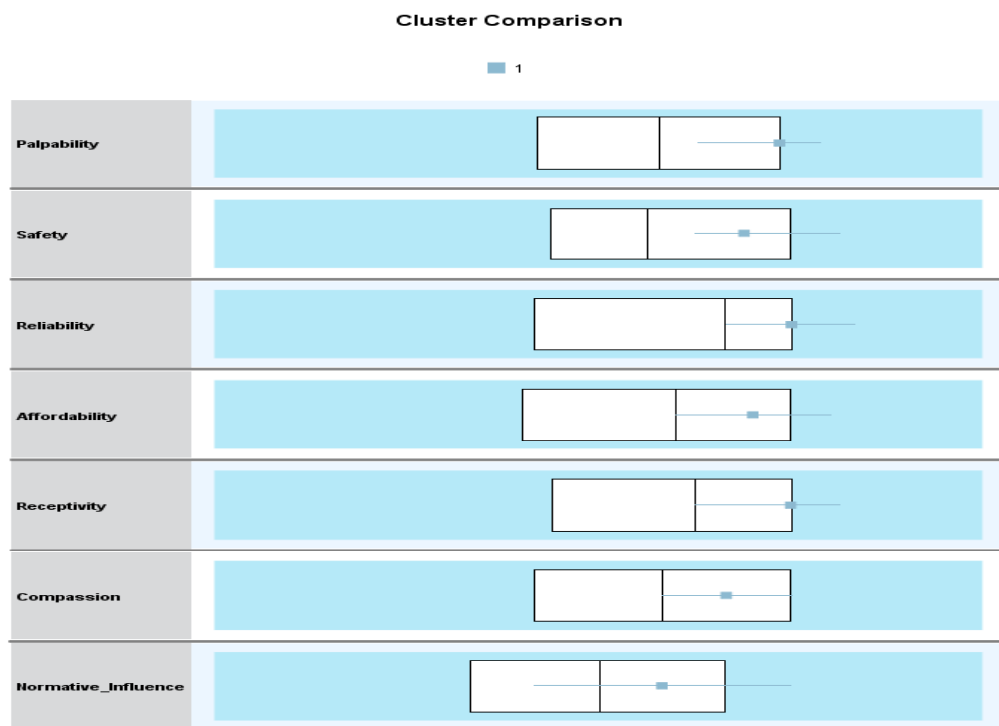


Figure 3 Level of agreement of business tourists with indicators of determinants of choice of public road transport firms in Minna

Revisit Uncertain Business Tourists

The cluster represented as cluster 2 in figure 4 is the smaller of the two clusters. With a large number of business tourists (100 persons) belonging to it and occupying

48.1% of the entire sampled respondents, it implies that a significant number of business tourists are somehow unhappy with the factors influencing the selection of road transports firms for trips. As shown in the

figure, business tourists belonging to this cluster are highly dissatisfied with indicators of palpability, safety, reliability, affordability, reliability, affordability and receptivity constructs and less unsatisfied with compassion and normative influence constructs.

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

Having established that limited study exists on determinants of business tourists' choice of public road transport firms globally and developing countries in particular and no research available on its segmentation, this paper reports the results of such investigation. As evident in the qualitative data analysis, seven factors emerged as determinants of business tourists' choice of public road transportation firms. The factors which include: palpability, reliability, receptivity, safety, compassion, affordability and normative influence have been affirmed to drive business tourists' selection behaviour of road transport firms in Minna, Nigeria. These identified factors are similar to the well-established dimensions of service quality in the service industry literature, which implies that as far as patronage of road transport firms is concern, the fundamental attraction is the nature of service offerings (Sang, Lee & Kang, 2012; Prakash & Mohanty, 2011).

This study result suggest that the market can be divided into two very important segments based on factors influencing business tourists' choice of road transport firms. These segments which are "patronage assured business tourists" and "revisit uncertain business tourists" were significantly predicted by palpability dimension which further gives credence to the value placed on

it by many business tourists in selection. Cluster 1 (patronage assured business tourists) which occupied 51.9% and the largest segment have members who opined that all the indicators of the seven (7) determinants are satisfactorily commendable. Additionally, cluster 2 (revisit uncertain business tourists) been the smallest cluster, but have a large number of business tourists occupying 48.1% who have shown dissatisfaction with the dimensions.

This huge segment of dissatisfied business tourists is worrisome, and necessary measure need to be undertaken by stakeholders in the transport industry to upscale the determinants in a way that appeals travellers. Otherwise, the possibility of road transport firms losing close to 50% of their customer is imminent. Without a segmentation approach to pertinent unique market discovery, it would have been difficult to find out that a significant (48.1%) number of business tourists are not satisfy with many service offerings of road transport firms given that over 95% of means score of all indicators of the determinants are above a positive value of 2.5, and also the existing real market situation will be unknown, which will hamper efficacious promotion approaches. For travel and tourism marketing and management to be effective, an understanding of the existing market segments is pertinent as a vividly delineated market segment allows for a specifically directed promotion programs (Park & Yoon, 2009). Therefore, this result shows the relevance of segmentation in market identification, which is required by management of transport firms in developing strategies to enhance patronage and long-time sustainability of their business venture and viability of public transport sector.

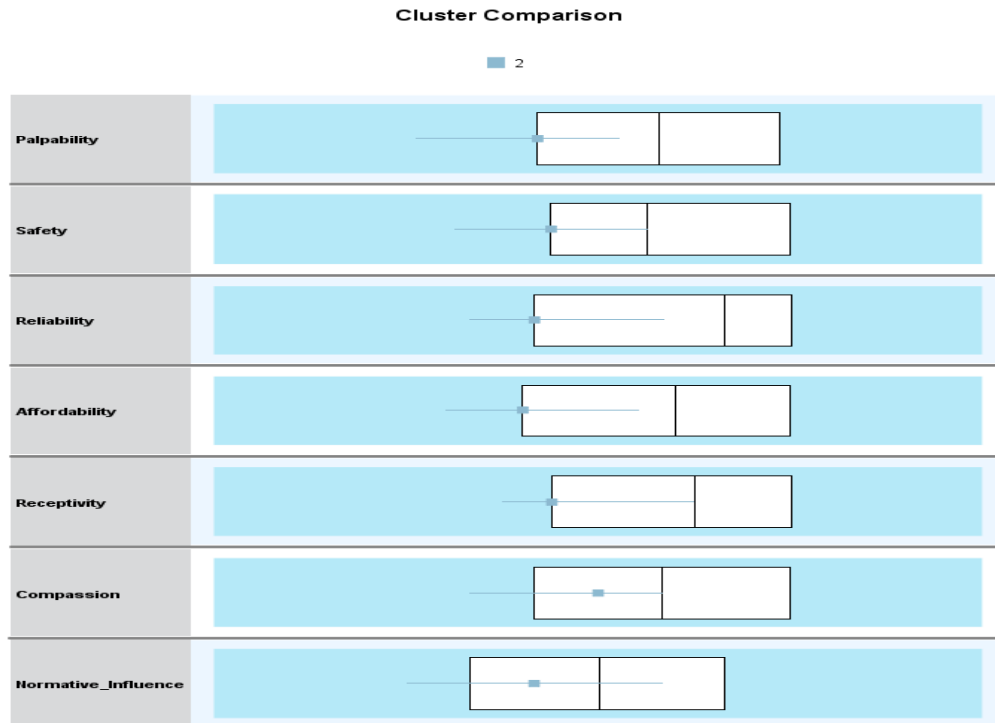


Figure 4 Figure 4. Level of dissatisfaction with indicators of determinants of business tourists choice of road transport firm in Minna

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has shown that descriptive analysis using mean scores alone will not provide the true situation of the feelings and opinion of business tourists, but a segmentation approach to niches market discovery will do. Thus, the honour is on transport firms' managements to devise ways of retaining loyal passengers through fascinating service offerings. Like any other social research, this study is not devoid of limitations. The main limitation worthy of note is the fact that the return rate of administered questionnaire was low and so small sample size was available for analysis and interpretations. Nonetheless, this does not in any way invalidate the findings of this study as it's exploratory in nature.

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