

**A STUDY OF THE LEVEL OF CONSUMER SATISFACTION AT  
THE GREYHOUND PASSENGER SERVICE DIVISION IN  
DURBAN**

by

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## **Abstract**

The study was undertaken to explore the concept of customer satisfaction in passenger transport in South Africa. The focus was public transportation, and efforts were made to find an institution that could cover opinions of many passengers regarding their expectations about public transport. The decision was made that buses be explored.

Greyhound Bus Services Company in Durban became ideal for the study for at least three reasons. Firstly, the researcher had access because of distance, she hails from Durban. Secondly, there are many passengers to and from Durban who use Greyhound compared to other areas. Thirdly, Greyhound operates nationally.

The study was quantitative, and a questionnaire was used to collect data from Greyhound passengers to and from Durban station. The researcher administered the questionnaires by face-to-face method. She personally travelled in the buses to interview passengers. Analysis of data was done and recommendations given. An attempt was also made to prepare an implementation plan from the recommendations made.

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## CHAPTER 1

### *Motivation for studying the level of consumer satisfaction*

*This chapter lays down the terrain for embarking on the study. It places the study into context with an introduction and study background, the anticipated objectives, the methodology used, pinpoints the envisaged contribution and gives the dissertation layout. In effect, the chapter gives the reader an overview of the entire study.*

### **1.1 Introduction**

Consumer satisfaction is an important aspect of business sustainability in any enterprise and has been researched in different settings. However, there has not been enough research of consumer satisfaction in the Republic of South Africa where consumers are passengers in a passenger transport industry. In this study aspects of consumer satisfaction are investigated in transport service provision. The intention is to highlight factors that have potential to lead to passenger satisfaction, and to identify those that might lead to passenger dissatisfaction. The whole study effort is aimed at assisting service providers to review approaches in provision of passenger transport services.

### **1.2 Background to the study**

In service rendering, consumers are becoming aggressive in demanding products that meet their expectations (Dawar & Pillutla, 2000). Products should meet the set standards, and for competitive approach to service provision, outstanding product performance is necessary (Dodson, 2000). Low prices consistent with excellent quality are also admirable from the customers' point (Jain & Srivastava, 2000).

Increasing global competition is continually adding pressure to bottom-line profit performance and compels companies to view their products and services from the perspective of the customer. Information about customer needs is necessary, and research can assist in its acquisition. Dutka (1993) points that research about consumer satisfaction focuses on the following two issues:

- Understanding expectations and requirements of the consumer, and
- Determining how well a company and its major competitors are succeeding in satisfying these expectations and requirements.

It is noticeable that consumers are demanding greater value in products and services, and they expect high levels of satisfaction (Eppright & Arguea, 1998). On the other hand, greater competition and tougher challenges present themselves in the market place (Langreth, 2000). Furthermore, according to Klose & Finkle (1995), consumer-driven quality is crucial for success and business sustainability.

Due to rapid changes and developments in the passenger transport services industry, new requirements for passenger satisfaction emerge as soon as the previous ones have been satisfied (Hellewell, 2000).

Greyhound Bus Services Company as a service provider provides services to consumers as the consumer wish. Greyhound's service foremost interest is to transport passengers to their destinations. The question to be answered in the study is:

**What are the controllable factors that could be used to satisfy consumers in the Greyhound passenger service division?**

It is anticipated that this study will be useful because Greyhound and other passenger transport companies will be able to plan and adapt to meet consumer expectations with the ultimate aim of achieving consumer satisfaction. Furthermore, Greyhound can also use the study recommendations in planning to exceed expectations with the aim of creating and/or increasing consumer loyalty.

### **1.3 Purpose and objectives of the study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate factors that could assist in sustainability of the quality of service that could satisfy the passenger transport consumer. As it is therefore also the purpose to investigate the level of quality and service that could satisfy the consumer, the study will also discuss and illustrate methods for integrating theory with practice using practical examples. The basis is an empirical consumer satisfaction study.

To operationalize the purpose of the study two specific objectives have been posited. These objectives are the following.

- **Primary objective**

To identify the factors that could be incorporated in the transport service practice to satisfy consumers; and

- **Secondary objective**

To determine the critical performance attributes that result in consumer satisfaction.

- **Tertiary objective**

To present ideas on customer satisfaction and related issues gathered by authoritative and experienced authors and practitioners using literature study.

#### **1.4 Contribution of the study**

According to the communication department of the bus company, no similar study has ever taken place in the Greyhound Bus Services Company in South Africa. This study therefore, is the first of its kind within Greyhound and is open to customisation for use in other passenger transport companies. It is expected that contributions will be at both the theoretical and the application level. The following points outline the anticipated contributions.

##### **1.4.1 Contribution at the theoretical level**

- Even though the industrial psychology methods used in the study are available in literature, it is expected that passenger transport companies could apply the study recommendations in their practice. The study forges new applications and a few modifications to the methods.
- The study aspires to customise the approach to passenger satisfaction within the industrial psychology realm from circumstances that were intended for other consumer satisfaction instances.
- The study endeavours to integrate various theories of consumer satisfaction and adds to the knowledge about passenger satisfaction for commuters travelling on public transport, but with reference to the bus services.
- Copies of this dissertation will be available in the library of the university and offices of the researcher. Other libraries may be given copies of the dissertation upon request. The overall benefit is that the elements presented in this study will be available as available literature on passenger transport issues.

#### **1.4.2 Contribution at application level**

- The initial discussions with the Marketing and Communication Divisions of Greyhound Bus Services Company have triggered the bus company to innovate for competitive and profitability purposes.
- Greyhound indicated that a study of this nature has never been undertaken in its passenger transport services. This study exposes possible application of industrial psychology methods for consumer satisfaction in the passenger transport sector.
- It is expected that the study will guide through its recommendations, methods that could be incorporated within the transport sector to add value for competitive purposes and business sustainability.
- The study anticipates accomplishment of an implementation plan that could be used in other transport companies apart from the buses.

#### **1.5 Layout of the study**

Chapter 1 presents the motivation for the study. It describes the problem definition, the purpose of the study, the scope, and the contribution anticipated from it.

Chapter 2 presents the literature survey. The concepts covered in the study are presented from the literature sources that include books, journal articles, the Internet, newspapers as well as discussions with fellow industrial psychology researchers and practitioners (including reputable experts) in the field of industrial psychology.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology followed. It presents all materials used, the manner in which they were used, and the steps followed are explained in chronological form in which they occurred.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study as extracted from the questionnaires.

Chapter 5 presents the interpretations.

In conclusion, Chapter 6 closes the study by presenting conclusions and recommendations made from the study.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided motivation for engaging in this study by giving the background, proposing the study approach and rendering the expected benefits. The study milestones have also been outlined and the background highlighted a lack of adequate research in the public passenger transportation, particularly in South Africa.

The methodology proposed for the study starts with literature to create the study context and the preparation of an appropriate questionnaire. Ultimately, the previous stages lead to the undertaking of an empirical study. Respondents used in the empirical study are the users (passengers) of the transport being investigated. Anticipated benefits of the study, presented as contributions categorised as theoretical and application levels, explain that a successful study has potential to lead to profitability, competitiveness and sustainability.

## CHAPTER 2

### *Literature review*

*This chapter presents literature to describe customer satisfaction for a passenger transport company and the literature that has been researched over the years about the aspects that are being probed at Greyhound Bus Services Company. The ideas on customer satisfaction are needed for comparing findings of the study with experimented and documented theory.*

*The flow of this chapter is: Customer satisfaction is presented first, literature regarding the probed experimental aspects follows and consolidation of the last two parts closes by defining what is implied as passenger satisfaction.*

*Aspects that guide literature review are customer satisfaction, marketing of a passenger transport company, requirements of transport for passengers, driver conduct and appearance, conduct of stewards and hostesses where applicable, the role of management and other employees in a passenger transport company. All these are needed to model a framework for a desirable passenger transport company.*

#### ***The objective of this chapter is:***

- *To present ideas on customer satisfaction and related issues gathered by authoritative and experienced authors and practitioners.*

### **2.1 Introduction**

Customer satisfaction is an important aspect of service enterprises. The next section starts by defining the term from a number of perspectives provided by several authors. The other sections deal with elements that are researched at Greyhound Bus Services Company; namely, customer profiles (a market tactic for segmentation), requirements for a virtuous passenger transport, a gratifying system for desirable passenger transport drivers, acceptable host and hostess practice, and the enviable conduct of service industry management and staff. These points are then put in the context of a passenger transport company, and a conclusion closes the chapter.

## 2.2 Customer satisfaction

The concept of customer satisfaction has matured over the years in business and marketing, and it is still advancing further. Its importance has led to related concepts such as customer loyalty, which implies the commitment of a customer to an item or a company (Linton, 1993). As customer loyalty is completely dependent on customer satisfaction, and cannot occur unless the customer is satisfied, the broad concept of customer satisfaction is important in service delivery.

The chapter proceeds from the conception that the aim of service delivery is to satisfy the customer and generate profits. Further, customers have needs, which makes them the buyers of services to satisfy these needs. There are certain expectations by different customers about the services they buy (Woodruff, Clemons, Schuman, Gardial & Burns, 1991).

Kaplan and Norton (1996) explain that customer satisfaction measures how well a company is performing, and provides feedback to the service provider. In agreement with the concept of customer loyalty, Kaplan and Norton point out that customers who receive a satisfactory service tend to demonstrate that by repeating purchase behaviour of the same service. This again, shows that the customer is indebted to the company that sells the service. The number or percentage of repeat purchases demonstrates the level of customer loyalty.

Expectations could be realistic from the service delivery point of view, but they could be high or unrealistic for the service renderer. The aim of service delivery, nonetheless, remains an attempt or effort to satisfy the "toughest" of the customer expectations as well as their needs. Based on this background, Walker (1990) describes customer satisfaction as the capability of the service provider to meet customer's needs and expectations.

Customers are people, and they transform in behaviour. Their needs and expectations change with developments (Woodruff et al, 1991). Customer satisfaction, as Walker (1990) explains, can only be feasible if the service provider knows the needs and expectations of the customer. It also implies that the service provider should understand the patterns of change of these needs and expectations, and Cardozo (1964) consents to this idea.

One of the challenges that service providers face is that sometimes it is not enough to satisfy customer needs and expectations. In situations where different service providers offer similar services, the one who satisfies customers better than the rest, survives. The implication is that customer satisfaction should in general be interpreted in the context of competition. Therefore, the service provider should imagine multiple (probably conflicting) objectives for customer satisfaction and competition, which are to be satisfied with the same services and strategies to outperform the competing service providers (Desatnick, 1987).

Further changes exposed by Dutka (1993) include undertaking customer satisfaction research to obtain knowledge about customer needs and expectations, developing service standards, measuring the satisfaction, developing service standards, evaluating customer loyalty, identifying development trends and making regular comparisons with competitors. According to Dutka (1993), the service provider should determine the critical performance attributes that result in customer satisfaction, assess company performance and performance of the competitors, establishes priorities, take corrective action and monitor progress.

Linton (1993) points out the importance of the consistency aspect in customer satisfaction. According to Linton, customer loyalty develops from the attitude of a service provider who renders a good quality service, better than the competitors and then supports the services even after a sale has been made. This includes friendly contacts that a service provider makes with the customer, asks for feedback about the rendered service and offers advice where possible. This "follow-up" approach also implies a professional and dependable manner of dealing with customer complaints where they emerge.

Walker (1990) emphasises the importance of customer satisfaction and recommends devising a strategy for rendering a customer satisfaction service. According to him, the strategy should start with planning for services. It should include knowledge about the customers, competitors, building a dependable organisation, ensuring quality of service components, creating staff climate for proper skilling and gaining of knowledge, and establishing elements that facilitate good service.

The idea of customer satisfaction has a number of implications. It has got its own objectives, driven by some outside forces and results in company benefits if it is taking place successfully. Firstly, the service provider aims to satisfy customer needs and expectations, to continue to do so even when they change and make attempts to do so better than the competitors. The implication is that the service provider needs to know the needs and expectations of their customers, and their patterns of change. Secondly, the service provider should know how the competitors operate and anticipate their possible strengths, then mobilize capacity to outperform or imitate these strengths. The benefits of a successful customer satisfaction exercise include customer loyalty and competitive advantage over some or all of the rival competitors.

The above notions present challenges of researches about competition, customer satisfaction and quality control aspects that include standards setting, monitoring and control (Garvin, 1988).

The other concept that emerges is about repositioning the company by benchmarking and creating yardsticks by studying the competitors who lead. After such benchmarking efforts, the company should undertake measures that will advance its competitive position by providing services that are superior to those offered by the leaders in competition.

*The elements that emerge when discussing customer satisfaction converge to one main aspect, which is customer loyalty. This means that the efforts of customer satisfaction are aimed also at building customer loyalty. The intention of the study at the Greyhound Bus Services Company is to measure the level of customer satisfaction, where the customer to be satisfied is the passenger. Therefore, the above arguments imply that the study is intended to evaluate customer loyalty (and the implied aspects) towards the bus company.*

### **2.3 Market segmentation**

Puohiniemi (1991) and Pring (1991) point out that direct and mass marketing have many disturbing problems. These problems include inability to focus, marketing without knowing which marketing effort is wasted, problem of scale, widespread heterogeneity of elements in the masses of customers, and so on. One of the judgments of Pring (1991) is that even though direct marketing is popular, it is one of the most wasteful and ineffective forms of marketing. Both Pring (1991) and Puohiniemi (1991) argue independently that reduction of the mass of customers and dividing (segmenting) them into useful form has potential to solve the problems of mass/direct marketing.

The underlying premise of market segmentation is that not all customers have the same needs and expectations. Hence, it is not appropriate to use single sales and marketing programmes to attract all potential customers. Companies need to respect the variety of needs which customers display, and then reflect this in their market offerings.

Even though it is an ideal idea to customise marketing programmes for every individual customer, it is generally unrealistic. According to Dibb and Simkin (1995), market segmentation allows a balance between heterogeneity of customers and limited supplier resources. This can be accomplished because grouping customers who share the same requirements and behaviour forms a market segment. Thus, customised service focus could become a possibility and highly suggested. Dibb and Simkin (1995) define market segmentation as the identification of customers sharing common needs, selection of which of these subgroups or segments to target and presentation to these targeted customers with well-defined sales and marketing programmes emphasising a distinctive service image or brand positioning.

Rice (1997) also describes market segmentation as involving the breakdown of the total broad and varied market into groups. He highlights the aim of the market segmentation process as the identification of groups whose constituent members have specific characteristics in common. In this way messages and services can be tailored specifically to address the needs and expectations of any of the targeted groups.

Fodness (1991) stresses that mass markets are heterogeneous and can be decomposed into subsets of customers. He presages that each of these subsets must be constructed to differ from all the others by virtue of demographics, personal attitudes, life circumstances, or personality. Greenberg and McDonald (1989) agree with the above notion, and add that a more important aspect is that these groups are likely to behave in observably different ways.

Kotler (1987) gives another definition of the concept of segmentation, consistent with the earlier ones. He defines market segmentation as the subdivision of a market into distinct subsets of customers. According to him, any such subset (segment) may conceivably be selected as a target market to be reached with a distinct marketing mix.

Rice (1997) points out that successful segmentation produces groups (segments) that are significantly different from one another in their requirements. Successful segmentation, according to him, also hopes to identify segments that are accessible, stable and large enough to make marketing worthwhile and profitable.

In agreement with Rice (1997), Greenberg and McDonald (1989) stress that the most traditional segmentation technique in marketing is the use of cross-tabulation to segment people according to easily identifiable and accessible characteristics.

There are a number of segmentation techniques that are available in literature and in marketing practice. Due to the limited scope of this mini-dissertation, only customer profiling is deliberated in the empirical study (surveys) as a segmentation basis and descriptor. The other reason for the choice of profiling is that the design of effective marketing programmes is contingent upon a clear profile of the characteristics of different customer types (Dibb & Simkin, 1995). Focusing on profiles that are easily accessible, stable and large is desirable according to Rice (1997) as well as Greenberg and McDonald (1989).

*A literature survey requires the discussion of the above and related elements from different perspectives as presented by different researchers and authors. These requirements and ideals are discussed in the next four sections.*

## **2.4 Passenger transport requirements**

The requirements discussed in this section are for passenger satisfaction, where passenger satisfaction means that the needs and expectations of the passenger are satisfied. To reflect the competitive market of passenger transportation, the aspects for competitive advantage and elements to suggest extra passenger benefits are also discussed.

A further point to note is that the premise of the presentation of this section is that public transport is assumed but without ruling out that there could be overlaps with private transport. Furthermore, some requirements are controllable from the side of drivers, hostesses, management and other parties that are involved. These aspects will be discussed wherever they fit, and in the required context.

Buchanan (1986) presents factors that affect the use of public transport, some of which transport providers are able to control. The main factors, according to him, are the extent of the public transport network provided, the capacity (magnitude) of service offered, the speed of travel, the quality of service (comfort of vehicles and stations, timing of journeys, convenience of ticketing arrangements, riding comfort, coordination of transport planning, overcrowding and breakdown rate, frequency of the transport, among others) and publicity as well as passenger information. Buchanan also points out that passengers are sensitive to unpleasant factors and tend to avoid a transport mode that has one or more of the negative factors. The implication is that if all the above factors are satisfactory to the passenger, the more the chances are of attracting the passenger. Needs and expectations are the beginning of passenger yearnings.

Robinson (1979) declares that design of a public transport should be attractive in appearance, and that the transport should be fit for purpose. Fitness for purpose includes punctuality, zero (or very little) breakdown rate, convenient operating hours and providing service to satisfy the needs and expectations of the passengers. Attractive appearance includes (modern and) attractive appearance inside and outside. These, according to Robinson, are the minimum requirements for customer satisfaction. Further, the level of offering of these elements, and the extra benefits rendered to passengers determine the level of competition.

Brown (1986) points out that competition affects the relative passenger satisfaction. Let us relate this with factors that Buchanan (1986) and Robinson (1979) suggested as leading to passenger satisfaction when undertaken as required by the passenger. The transport company that attains these services better than others have more chance of displacing other transport providers. In other words, failing in one or more of these aspects relegates the transport company to the undesirable status of unworthy transport provider.

On the other hand, successful offering makes the transport provider a worthy contender for passenger satisfaction. This worthy contender will not necessarily be the most preferred (or the leader), only after offering better than all the other competitors can it be considered the leading transport provider. The relative merits of passenger service provision determine the positioning of the provider.

Roberts (1979) advocates that the design of transport should be for the efficient serving of passengers, with safety, comfort, convenience and positive pleasure of the passengers. Furthermore, he claims that passengers find transport and stations satisfying when they are convenient, modern, and clean/neat. He also points out that transport is more charming when it offers positive entertainment such as televisions, films and other ways to relieve the distress and frustration. He also believes that keeping the passengers busy at waiting stations and providing them with the right information makes them feel at ease.

Steinmetz and Savage (1986) single out the level of passenger service provision, safety and frequency of operation and punctuality as important elements in public service provision. However, they warn that competition determines which transport company stands more chance to attract the highest market share in public transportation. Passengers are attracted more when their needs and expectations are satisfied better than by the competitors in the industry.

Creswell (1979) remarks that both the internal and external design of (especially) passenger transport should be attractive, neat and fit for purpose. As was said earlier, fitness for purpose is to supply transportation conveniently, punctually with smooth pull offs and stops, zero breakdowns, and stopping when passengers require them to.

Further, Creswell points out that even though all passengers need the above treatment, many other passengers would prefer to be treated with extras (luxuries), such as being offered reading material (sometimes in their own languages), availability of their culture (in foods, language, and others), and stops to relax during travelling.

In discussing the needs of passengers, the most discussed aspect of public transport that comforts passengers is safety (Carr, 1986). Other aspects mentioned are timing of transport operations, comfort, punctuality and the level at which these are offered. In addition to these desirables, competition triggers innovation, and that transport providers need to provide passengers with extra benefits without exclusively charging them (Savage, 1984).

*To recap, authors imply that transport should be comfortable, modern, attractive, smooth pull offs and stops, limited accidents, punctual, follow operating hours, provide reading material and entertainment in all languages and cultures, and any extras to outsmart competitors.*

## 2.5 Desirable driver conduct

The bus driver has a huge influence in the passenger satisfaction aspect. For example, reckless driver (getting involved in accidents), late arrivals, rough pulling and stopping and so on influence passengers to rethink their use of the transport. The last section implied these as undesirables for passenger transport that could repel and displease the passengers.

In this section, the driver of a public transport is discussed as having control over some of these factors. Thus, the conduct of the driver is discussed to show how it influences passenger satisfaction.

Schmidt (1996) advises that passenger transport drivers should be trained to maintain order and resolve conflict when it arises. He is concerned that drivers have no training on turning away from violence and that generally, management of companies do not take them seriously to deal with people of diverse backgrounds and nature.

As a result, Schmidt (1996) puts forward that drivers be empowered to deal with emotional disturbances, behaviour disorders and general violence of the passenger and other road users. Furthermore, he proposes that drivers be empowered to protect innocent passengers from the behaviours and violent conduct of unruly passengers.

**Curriculum Review** (1991) advocates that training programmes for drivers should assure safe and dependable transportation. Safety envelops accident free, relaxed and a comfortable riding atmosphere. It also implies that no passengers harm others by their conduct or behaviour. Dependability implies that drivers can deal with situations of accidents and breakdown to the satisfaction of passengers, that they drive according to the rule of law (i.e. traffic regulations), they appear sober, polite, considerate and are experienced to deal with problems on the road.

The driver of a passenger transport is entrusted to transport passengers from one place to the next. To ensure safety and dependability, Lipscomb (1997) points out that drivers need to be provided with training to ensure disciplined conduct. By using passenger transport, he argues that it shows that "communities put discipline in the driver's seat", which implies that passengers expect the drivers to have discipline.

Lipscomb (1997) also emphasises that drivers need to enforce law and order in passenger transport vehicles, which they need to have passenger management skills, which should ensure safety and hassle free rides.

NEA Today (2000) advises that drivers should go an extra mile from common expectations to provide passenger safety and dependable transportation. The publication points out that drivers have the potential to control the transport for smooth pull offs and stops, reduction of accidents (or, alternatively, increasing safety) and punctuality. The benefits of dedication to safety, as mentioned by NEA Today (2000), are increased usage of the transport, and safe communities.

Sober conduct, stability, politeness, legal conduct and safe driving are encouraged by Albery and Guppy (1995). These authors point to the possible results of approved and of improper conduct. Approved conduct has benefits, including career advancement and sometimes financial rewards.

The emphasis made by Albery & Guppy (1995) is that unacceptable behaviour has many negative impacts, including legal punishment, demotion at work and social disapproval. Causing and being involved in accidents is another possible negative impact.

Candler (1995) emphasises that drivers need to be trained. This endeavour will demonstrate the seriousness about safe driving. She also points out that drivers should receive tough penalties for unsafe driving and also be rewarded for exceptional driving. She stresses that training should be provided as a device to enhance safe and other desirable conduct, and cautions that failure to train drivers is a mistake of the employing company even if it is the driver getting the transport company into trouble by causing an accident.

Johnson (1997) informs that there are programmes that can assess driving ability. These programmes include physical potential, cognitive skills, vision, reaction time plus other strengths and weaknesses. Even though Johnson (1997) points out that such driver assessments/evaluations are the choice of individual drivers, she recommends that passenger transport companies use them as part of their policy to employ and retain drivers in their employ. She also shares her concerns that there are negative impacts that could be caused by wrong choices, while positive impacts are enhanced by desirable or acceptable conduct.

According to Wright (1999), the driver of a passenger transport should be friendly to passengers and be well presented. He uses this argument to recommend that transport companies supply the drivers with clean, elegant uniforms. Further, he emphasises that drivers should be trained; supported and groomed well to enhance their capabilities to offer services to the expected levels.

*Condensed together to conclude the section, the above authors believe that bus drivers have the potential to improve service quality. Among other conducts, drivers should be trained and be able to provide protection to passengers who are offended by others, to deal with emotional disturbances and behaviour disorders, to offer safety and be dependable, to be polite, to obey traffic laws, to be sober and considerate, to use experience and be stable while driving and most of all, should go an extra mile to satisfy the needs and expectations of their passengers. These authors, however, point out that for most transport companies, these remain untested ideals. The next section presents literature about the hostesses in a passenger transport, where applicable.*

## **2.6 Services of stewards and hostesses**

Some passenger transportations do not use stewards and hostesses. This section focuses on passenger transport companies that use them. Stewards and hostesses also have enormous influence in the passenger satisfaction aspect. For example, failure to assist passengers with immediate solutions to their problems could be interpreted that the company fails to support passengers. Serving of snacks and any foodstuffs, providing information, entertainment and so on, are some services that stewards and hostesses usually support passengers with. This section discusses the impact of stewards and hostesses in passenger satisfaction.

Guidelines for good conduct of stewards and hostesses in passenger transportation include hard work, constant positive contact with passengers and positive attitude towards them (Mynatt, 1999). According to him, a welcoming and smiling face should accompany the service to these people. The argument put forward is that such behaviour makes the served foodstuffs such as meals, snacks and drinks somewhat more pleasant.

Further, as part of passenger satisfaction, stewards and hostesses should entertain passengers, furnish them with the necessary information and keep them cheerful throughout the journey. It is stressed that passengers should know what is available for them. Stewards and hostesses should remind them and invite them to request what they need. The services of stewards and hostesses are not core to passenger satisfaction, however, these services add the extra that was said to be "going an extra mile to satisfy the customer", mainly to perform beyond expectations.

Post (1994) on the other hand, stresses that entertaining passengers makes the whole journey enjoyable. She points out that training of stewards and hostesses can enhance their skills to deal with passengers better and in their general presentability. Stewards and hostesses, according to him, should converse in a friendly manner with passengers. They should also provide passengers with information, and also entertain them.

Wright (1999) also adds to the expected behaviour of stewards and hostesses when he explains that the intangible services that are rendered by stewards and hostesses have potential to add value to the service rendered. The conduct advocated by him includes cleanliness, reliability, friendliness and helpfulness. Other issues that he also mentions are timing and politeness. For example, the foodstuffs should be served at reasonable intervals, and politely. The standard should be maintained across all the branches of the service provided. In the case of transport services, there should be consistency in all the vehicles belonging to the company.

Dutka (1993) and Wright (1999), independently point out that stewards and hostesses are the company's contact point with passengers during travel. The guideline they give is that stewards and hostesses should serve the passengers to build the company reputation. Further, they are urged to work together professionally and treat one another well to demonstrate unity and family attitude.

Du Plessis et al (1995) narrates about the importance of personnel within an industry to communicate and interact. The aim is to exchange ideas about the expectations of customers. The benefit that will emerge for stewards and hostesses is about conduct. Information through interaction can enable the stewards and hostesses to understand the extent of their politeness, behaviour, and courteousness and also which conduct is unexpected or illegal, if executed.

Wright (1999), Du Plessis et al (1995) and Dutka (1993), among other researchers, emphasise training of stewards and hostesses. These researchers highlight the value of formal training of employees who have direct contact with passengers. This argument also shows that formal training of stewards and hostesses is very important for the transport company.

In conclusion, literature enlightens that good stewards and hostesses in passenger transport are those that provide passengers with relevant information for the journey, about conditions of the route, about available facilities and comfort the passengers by assisting where necessary. Other services that are driven by competing transport companies are entertaining passengers using quality videos, serving drinks and snacks (and doing it politely) as well as being courteous for the entire journey.

*To contextualise the previous literature and place it under real transport company constraints, it is noted that at the top of every company has a management who is in charge of all the activities in the company. The drivers, stewards and hostesses as well as all the other employees in the firm take their directives from (the guidelines set by) management.*

*Literature in the next section discusses the essential administration that management could follow to ensure that employees in the company perform according to company policy to satisfy the passenger.*

## **2.7 Management and employee role in customer satisfaction**

Management is vital for customer satisfaction, it is at management level where consumer satisfaction is brewed. Management draws the strategic plan, which is the foremost handbook for the activities of the firm. The action plans are drawn from the strategic plan. Firstly, management decides the brand of transport to acquire for the company. If this brand does not match the passengers' needs and expectations, then management has not succeeded in the endeavour to satisfy the consumer. Secondly, the conduct of the drivers, stewards and hostesses depends on the guidance provided by management. The training that management gives (or fails to give) the employees has impact on the company. It is therefore important that management puts guidelines in place and implementation plans to ensure that employees who have contact with passengers are equipped to deal with the passengers' requirements. In particular, they should be empowered to manage their terrain of employment.

Benedell (1994) points out the aim of strategic management. According to him, it suggests that successfully managed companies make choices about strategy to align with the changing environment. The changes occurring in South Africa lead companies to adapt their strategy, their organisation and their actions. The main challenges facing South Africa (and the entire globe) include competition and the changing needs and expectations of the customer. Benedell implies that companies should adapt to focus on the needs and expectations of customers.

Managing a service business starts with the company vision, mission and objectives (Walker, 1990). As this is the territory of management, all managers should be able to interpret and explain them in a way that makes sense to all the employees, customers and others who have interest in the company. He points out the importance of keeping records (including performance data), self-evaluation and training. The actions of company employees are required to achieve the objectives, which fulfill the company's mission. Without management understanding the company expectations, the other employees could find it difficult to know what they are required to do. Training breaches this gap. Training should be geared towards keeping records and analyzing them for better focus. It should also teach the employees how they should perform self-evaluation, audit/evaluate their divisions, conduct and aspects of their jobs. Management should know how to support and guide others and should also be prepared to receive feedback from subordinates.

Mbigi (1994) mentions that in an African context emphasis is on the communal spirit (teamwork), the spirit of analysis (critical thinking), creativity (innovation), dreams (vision), attitudes, oral culture (communication), inclusivity and entrepreneurship. He points out that these are taught in a general "home" education, not requiring the learner to go to a formal educational institution. A vital benefit of that upbringing is that everything that is established by the community is bound to be sustainable. Thus, in the context of passenger transport companies, which are competing for survival, this type of training is imperative.

The key point is sustainability, suggesting the survival of a company even under the emerging pressures of competition, technology and development. Satisfactory service provision and advantage over the competitors are some essential elements for survival. Customer satisfaction is used to determine satisfactory service provision; hence it is key to sustainability. According to Mbigi, this must be taught. This is where training comes in.

These discussions recommend provision of training for all employees. Firstly, people entrusted with the running of a company must be taught to manage, they must have dreams (vision), be creative, be able to communicate, and they need to be able to lead and work with people (communal spirit, or teamwork). They should also know the company so that they can serve as advisors to the masses they are leading. They should also know their roles in the companies.

Other employees should also be taught to perform their jobs, they should know their roles in contribution to the mission of the company, and they should know how to interact with other divisions that they are expected to collaborate with, including management (communal spirit). They need to know the consequences of their actions.

Therefore, for inclusivity, everyone in the firm should be trained in the requirements and ethics of their positions, including an understanding of the actions of other employees. They should know who they will work with (i.e. the ranks that work with them and the customer to be served). In addition, they need to understand the implications of the alternative actions in the environment that involve their company.

Service industries in a volatile industry such as passenger transportation should utilise every employee to support the customer for enveloping all the facets of passenger satisfaction. It is the responsibility of management to ensure that everyone knows his or her role in the company. They should also know that they are contributing to competition and hence should act in such a way that they are running their own companies (entrepreneurship). This means that when they perform their jobs, they should go an extra mile to exceed customer satisfaction. Their training and experience should also enhance this.

*In the following section the above ideals are placed in the study context. The study is about customer satisfaction and conducted in the passenger industry. In particular, a case study is undertaken at a bus company, namely, Greyhound. To contextualize further, Greyhound Bus Services Company is based in Durban, South Africa. Therefore, the next section focuses on customer satisfaction in a passenger transport industry in an African setting.*

## **2.8 Implications for passenger satisfaction**

This section recaps the contributions from the previous sections, namely; customer satisfaction, market segmentation, passenger satisfaction, passenger transport requirements, desirable driver conduct, services of stewards and hostesses, and management and employees' roles in customer satisfaction. Thereafter the discussion focuses on the ramifications of each of the above aspects in the passenger satisfaction endeavour.

Passenger transport companies are involved in the service business. As was said earlier, customer satisfaction is important in this business. Customers are passengers. Passenger satisfaction is the ability to satisfy the needs and expectations of the passengers. In the competitive and developing world in which the businesses find themselves, satisfaction of passengers is evaluated on a relative level. The loyalty of passengers to a transport company depends on the ability of the company to provide passenger satisfaction and it is demonstrable if there are repeating usages.

Like any group of customers, passengers are people who can be segmented according to their similarity. Passengers are divided in such a way that similar passengers are grouped together. The result is that individuals from the different segments differ in characteristics. Segmenting passengers in this way is intended to assist in determining the needs and expectations of different segments.

There is a great possibility that the needs and expectations of different segments will differ. It therefore assists in planning for each segment to suit those needs and interests. It also assists the service provider not to generalise services to every passenger even though it does not fit them. The reader needs to be reminded that the discussion has indicated the preference of this study to use customer profiles for passenger segmentation. Ideal passenger satisfaction starts with the satisfaction of each and every segment. If on aggregate the resulting passenger satisfaction has an edge over other passenger transport companies, the more its chance of a larger market share. A larger market share usually depends on many repeat users of services and many new comers; it suggests a higher degree of passenger loyalty.

Passenger satisfaction is required from the transportation mode(s) used by the company and stations used by the passengers. The role players for the task of satisfying passengers at these places are the drivers, the hosts and hostesses, management and other employees who have contact with the passengers. Each one of these role players has a specific role to play, and the different roles are required to strengthen one another. For efficient functioning to advance passenger satisfaction, each of the role playing elements mentioned above is to be given an appropriate context.

The ideal transport requirements for passenger satisfaction include attractive appearance, fitness for purpose and dependability, zero defects (no breakdowns), convenient traveling hours for passengers, and other extra passenger benefits to match and/or perform better than their competitors.

Drivers, on the other hand, are expected to drive safely, smoothly for passenger comfort, be on time (punctuality), be polite to passengers, obey traffic rules, be neat, presentable and further, go an extra mile, within circumstances, to satisfy passengers and/or outperform their competitors. From the literature surveyed it was gathered that drivers are expected to be capable of dealing with emotional disturbances and behaviour disorders of passengers and other road users. Further, drivers are expected to protect passengers during travel.

Stewards and hostesses are expected to entertain passengers, supply them with information, show courteousness and be presentable. Managers and other employees who have contact with passengers should also interact with passengers, assist with passenger and respond promptly to passengers' requests. The role players in the transportation enterprise should interact well with one another to provide benefits that exceed the sum of benefits of segments of the personnel.

The discussions emphasised that all employees (including management) require training to enable them to perform the tasks as expected by the employing company. With segmentation of passengers there should be a matching segmentation of transport, drivers, stewards and hostesses and management and other relevant staff.

In the language of Management Science, the method proposed for offering the needed services, plus continuous improvement of services by good interfacing of the right people, good focus and relevant training and where everyone in the company is involved, is called total quality management (TQM) (Berenson & Levine, 1996).

To recapitulate the implications for passenger transport, some recommendations for passenger transport companies emerge. They are listed in the next paragraph.

Transport companies should:

- ◆ Profile their market as a segmentation strategy and then study each market separately to determine the specific needs for each segment
- ◆ Profile their employee forces according to the needs of the segmented passengers
- ◆ Provide specific training for each employee category according to their expected roles as they suit the passenger segment which they will serve
- ◆ Conduct workshops for different employees to encourage interaction and cooperation with the intention to enhance teamwork, especially when deployed in the transport during travel
- ◆ Provide training for all employees on aspects of passenger satisfaction
- ◆ Encourage and provide basic training on practical research, where employees will be expected to gather information from passengers as well as feedback about their services
- ◆ Train the drivers, hosts and hostesses, management and relevant staff in different segments on their job requirements as well as be conditioned to work together
- ◆ Condition the different personnel segments to encourage competition across different segments and members of the same segment be trained to cooperate for maximization of passenger satisfaction and
- ◆ Encourage the spirit of total quality management in passenger service provision.

These are not the only possibilities for improving customer service. They simply are the clear or apparent implications of the literature presented in this chapter. In the next section the discussion closes the literature by a concluding summary.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

The literature surveyed proposes market segmentation in passenger transportation companies. This is to divide the passenger market into separate and according to unique needs. The intention is to ensure increased benefits for passengers. It also recommends training of employees and management. Aspects of training should include vital aspects of customer satisfaction, specific requirements of the tasks of job categories and the needs of the passenger segments for which they are being trained. They should also be trained on aspects of practical research. Practical research can provide skill and knowledge for collecting feedback and suggestions from the passengers about the services rendered, where and how they could be improved, and where they should be stressed. Implementation of this research has potential to provide an approach to focus and improve services.

## CHAPTER 3

### *Research methodology*

*This chapter describes the methodology followed from the problem idea through up to the report stage. The principal concern of the study is customer satisfaction in service provision. The Greyhound Bus Services Company was used for the study, to gather information needed to address the study problem. Wide-ranging experiences from different people are needed to balance the discussion.*

#### **The objective of the chapter is:**

- *To describe the approach followed in undertaking the study.*

### **3.1 Introduction**

Besides the researcher's need to complete a higher qualification and essentially a teaching-learning experience, this study has developed within the bounds of the theoretical framework in customer satisfaction. Firstly, it is an academic study. Secondly, due to the anticipated benefits from the study, particularly the possible use of findings and recommendations by Greyhound management, this study also becomes an applied management study. Thirdly, the nature of the study makes it a tool and data-driven study (Emory & Cooper, 1991). The tool used in the study is the questionnaire, and it was used in data collection.

The problem that this study is pursuing is about customer satisfaction on the one side, and passenger transport on the other. Specifically, the study wants to determine the manner in which the Greyhound Bus Services Company provides passenger services. It is felt that the background to the relationship between Greyhound and its customers could assist in understanding all the details. That is, the study also wants to establish how this relationship is accomplished.

Therefore, this study intends to:

- Understand the expectations and requirements of passengers, and
- Determine how well the company and its major competitors are succeeding in satisfying these expectations and requirements.

It is imperative for the study objectives to be attainable. In this case the study problem is researchable because data collection in the real world can provide answers to it. That is, the two points above can be addressed by undertaking a survey, and this study has approached the problem by doing just that.

These have implications in the overall study. For example, the study should also disclose who the study role players are, what exact roles they are playing and what benefits they get in playing their part. The main role players in the study are the researcher, the respondents and the Greyhound as a whole.

Other factors that could be of interest in this research include the use of local communities in both staffing and shareholding at the Greyhound stations and centres, the contribution of Greyhound in the well being of the local communities, and so on. However, due to the limited scope of the study, these cannot be addressed.

## **3.2 Demarcation and scope**

### **3.2.1 Geographically**

Durban has a centre for the Greyhound Bus Services Company. Furthermore, it has a vast history as a tourist destination. To emphasise this, Durban is increasingly becoming more attractive since the opening of South Africa to the world in 1994. In fact, Durban is adapting to the tourism demands of a modern society on a continuous basis.

Selection of Durban as the geographical area for the study was made from towns and cities that included Bloemfontein, Cape Town, Durban, East London, Grahamstown, Johannesburg, Kimberley, Mafikeng, Polokwane and Port Elizabeth. Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg made it to the shortlist of cities for the study because of their sizes as well as the magnitudes of activities taking place in them.

In further comparison, Durban is mainly a tourist attraction when compared to influx for employment as is the case with the other two cities.<sup>1</sup> Compared to Cape Town, each has a sea and a harbour (i.e., ports). However, Durban is more accessible to many people because it is not so far from the central parts of South Africa. When Durban is compared with Johannesburg, the latter does not border a sea; and for leisure, more people move from Johannesburg to Durban than the other way. It was finally decided that Durban be given high priority when compared with other centres.

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<sup>1</sup> This was discussed with a Greyhound Marketing Officer from an informal observation.

It should also be noted that the study is more about choice than an obligation in deciding on the transport options. While on this point it was observed that commuters on leisure make choices while the needy ones seeking jobs use the cheapest available means of transport (Jansson, 1996). Therefore, most of the commuters going in and out of Johannesburg to look for work use the cheapest transport, not necessarily the most satisfying one as is the case with most commuters in and out of Durban. For the reasons mentioned, among others, Durban was selected for the study.

### **3.2.2 Respondent coverage**

A combination of different passengers was used in the study as an attempt to find balance and more coverage in the presentation. If few or a single group is used, this could imply limited perspective. On the other hand, more groups have potential to provide information from a wider perspective, and could also address concerns or find and solve problems that encourage speedy coming in of the prospective passenger.

Furthermore, the respondents were diverse in terms of age, race, nationalities, gender, the number of times they have used the buses. It was in fact necessary to gather feeling and perceptions from different constituencies.

### **3.2.3 Research approach**

A case-study research approach was used within Greyhound. Only primary data was used as there was no secondary data. It was highlighted earlier that this study is the first of this form that has ever taken place at Greyhound. The current section describes the target population that serves as the source of data for the study, or respondents.

The target population consists of Greyhound passengers who leave Durban to other places by a Greyhound bus and others arriving from other destinations to Durban, also by a Greyhound bus. These respondents were in buses when and where they indicated their willingness to accept the interview for the purpose of this study.

The study background, research proposal and discussion with a number of parties concluded that it was sufficient that only closed-ended questions be used as this study is qualitative and requiring no numeric responses (Baker, 1991). Nevertheless, there are numerical codes used to convert original answers in an attempt to show the relative extent of the different responses. The concern about consumer satisfaction in service industry triggered this study.

Discussions with some service providers<sup>2</sup> and passengers of a number of transport modes also encouraged the investigation.<sup>3</sup> The literature study of Chapter 2 provided secondary information that this study depended on. Questions to address the concerns mentioned were gathered and formulated to compile the study questionnaire. The ultimate goal is to gather information on how the South African passenger transport system offers services compared to the standards set by the global trend.

The study also wants to use the knowledge gained from Greyhound in other transport companies and businesses. The hypothesis put forward is that development of other service establishments could benefit by use of the study recommendations as they are intended for service provision towards consumer satisfaction.

The questionnaire was made easy to be understandable, especially by the interviewees. A pilot study was used to improve the questionnaire (details of which are given in the next section). Plans were then made on how to regulate these questionnaires. It was decided that the researcher be the sole interviewer for consistency of approach and to reduce costs in the entire endeavour.

The researcher administered the questionnaires in the buses during trips, and only with those passengers that were not bothered by the researcher's presence and requests. Respondents completed the questionnaires in the presence of the researcher in case they had questions or they needed clarification on certain aspects of the questionnaire.

### **3.3 Empirical research design**

#### **3.3.1 Characterization of a research design**

By a research design the study implies the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data (Emory & Cooper, 1991). The research design assists the researcher in the allocation of resources by deciding on experiments, interviews, observation, and the analysis of records, simulation, or some combination of these. It also assists in making the decision whether data collection methods and the research situation need to be highly structured.

The research design also helps in deciding if an intensive study of a small sample will be more effective than a less intensive study of a large sample. Lastly, the research design assists in choosing between a primarily, a qualitative or quantitative study or a combination of both.

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<sup>2</sup> These include management consultants from Andersons, Deloitte & Touché and Manchu Consulting.

<sup>3</sup> The passengers include fellow aeroplane, bus, taxi and train passengers.

Therefore, a research design is the plan and structure of investigation necessary to obtain answers to a research question, which includes an outline of what the investigator will do from writing questions and their operational implications to the final analysis of data.

The basis of this study was to observe and measure the perceptions of passengers in an attempt to model consumer satisfaction for public transport users, or passenger satisfaction. It is therefore appropriate to motivate our use for the research design used in this study, namely, the empirical design.

### **3.3.2 Rationale for using the empirical research design**

Emory and Cooper (1991) define empiricism as denoting observations and propositions based on sense experience and/or derived from such experience by methods of inductive logic, including mathematics and statistics. According to them, empirists attempt to describe, explain and make predictions through observation. This study describes from literature and empirical study, and then recommend profitable ways. Furthermore, they explain that scientific knowledge is obtained through inductive, empirical approaches and also secured through theoretical means that are based on deductive reasoning.

Based on the above description, it was proper to use empirical research design because data collection could ensure the relevance of the data and the fact that data would be recent. It was also necessary to follow empiricism to ensure that the data structure could enhance the method decided for analysis. Lastly, the empirical design followed in this study is described by, among other authors, Day (1994), Emory and Cooper (1991), Macrina (1995), Reynolds and Simmonds (1983) and O'Connor (1991) as scientific.

## **3.4 Empirical research method**

### **3.4.1 Description of the research methods followed**

The beginning of the formal study comprised of finding, selecting and reviewing the literature, followed by designing, piloting, modifying and finalising the research questionnaire. Selection of respondents was discussed and finalised with Greyhound managers. The target population was made entirely of Greyhound passengers leaving or arriving at the Durban Greyhound station. The research approach agreed upon was to hold face-to-face interviews with them.

It was also decided during research planning stage (i.e., at the design phase) that data analysis was going to involve coding to uncover the extent of the impressions that the passengers have about aspects being investigated. Lastly, reports were also going to follow the study.

### **3.4.2 Rationale for using the empirical research method**

The empirical research method adds on the process already started at the design phase. It was decided at the design phase that empiricism is suitable to answer the research question for this study. Empiricism started with the plan (or research design), and concludes with the implementation. The empirical research method serves as the required implementation.

## **3.5 Respondents**

### **3.5.1 Population of commuters**

This section describes the targeted source of data for the study. The target population for the study was the Greyhound passengers who use the Durban Greyhound bus station. The sample was limited to passengers who were leaving Durban to other places by a Greyhound bus and others arriving from other destinations to Durban, also by a Greyhound bus, who were willing to complete the questionnaires for the researcher. The population of respondents comprised of all ages, races, nationalities and genders. These population profiles were varied for segmentation purposes.

Greyhound was selected because, according to the information given in the researcher's meeting with Greyhound managers, Greyhound is a well-known passenger transport company from far and near around South Africa, and is reputable to be offering competitive passenger services to many passengers. According to Greyhound managers, Greyhound is successful due to its relationship with its consumers and the professional services it offers.

The number of respondents that was finally used is 100. The aim was to use every available subject that could add value to the study. Hence, this study was discussed fully with managers of Greyhound Bus Services Company. Convenience sample was utilised. The researcher boarded buses from Durban to other places and asked passengers to respond. The aim when using this approach was to negotiate cooperation from passengers to respond and enough time to elicit information from many respondents. In the next paragraph the sampling design is outlined.

### **3.5.2 The sample**

The researcher decided to use a sample of hundred (100) respondents. A sample of coaches was made, and the researcher travelled in them to negotiate responses. This sample of coaches was based on the researcher's financial convenience because some trips would have been more expensive beyond her affordability. In each coach that the researcher used, a sample was selected by passengers' willingness to participate. The sub-samples were then collected until the targeted 100 respondents were accomplished. In the end the profiles of the respondents covered diversified ages, races, nationalities, genders and the frequencies of use of Greyhound coaches.

### **3.5.3 Sampling method**

#### **3.5.3.1 Characterization of the sampling method**

This section describes the sampling methods used in the study. The method used for data collection was convenience sampling, a nonprobability sampling method where convenience of the researcher needs to be taken into account (Murdick & Cooper, 1982). Convenience of the researcher was taken into account due to financial and time constraints.

The researcher selected trips with the assistance of the managers at Greyhound according to cost, and requested the passengers to assist with the completion of the questionnaires. Some respondents were not willing to assist, and in the end there had to be more trips by coaches undertaken by the researcher just to accomplish the targeted 100 sampling units. In the end after a few more trips than was anticipated, the targeted 100 respondents was achieved.

#### **3.5.3.2 Rationale for the sampling method**

A nonprobability sampling method was used to ensure study completion. Probability methods are based on known population patterns, hence were not viable as respondents were unknown. The choice of convenience sampling method out of other nonprobability methods was because it accommodated the researcher's lack of both finances and time. It could demonstrate the capability to accomplish the study without reducing its value.

### **3.6 Procedure and the questionnaire**

#### **3.6.1 Exploration**

The exploration process took place before the empirical study. It began with a search for published data on the research problem and none was found that was directly related to customer service in passenger transport. The researcher also sought out experts in the field of (mainly passenger) transport and in customer satisfaction. As a result the researcher reviewed literature on passenger transport and, separately, on customer satisfaction. Informal discussions and consultations also took place with experts in these domains. The research instrument used in this study is a questionnaire.

#### **3.6.2 Rationale for using the questionnaire**

A questionnaire is a tool that can document the issues raised in the triggering stage of a study and in the research design. The above statement is true also about this passenger transport satisfaction investigation. The researcher was comfortable with a study where interaction with the respondents was possible, and using the questionnaire as it occurred in this study was one possible approach. A questionnaire is also capable of capturing information in a stored form, and the questionnaires can be visited and revisited at will when necessary.

#### **3.6.3 Description of the questionnaire**

Closed-ended questions were used and no probing was necessary as the questions were specific. Furthermore, the questionnaire, available resources and time excluded the study to include other unexpected responses. The questions that were asked were intended to explore envelop Greyhound coaches, drivers, hostesses, management and other employees. The researcher travelled in every coach in which respondents were filling in the questionnaires. This was to provide support and answer any questions that the respondents would ask. Every respondent who agreed to participate in the survey completed the first page of the profile of the respondent. Unfortunately, two respondents failed to complete the remainder of the questionnaires. This left 98, the number of effective responses.

Information required about Greyhound coaches, which were gathered from literature, ranged from attractiveness, safety, comfort, convenience of departure and arrival, times, availability of reading material in all languages and entertainment, reasonable stops for rest and relaxation, breakdown rate, punctuality, smoothness of busses and accommodation of cultures of all passengers.

Regarding the Greyhound drivers the questionnaire sought to find out about their politeness, driving conduct, experience, preventability and whether they provide the necessary protection to the passengers, especially against misbehaving passengers.

The questionnaire tried to find out about Greyhound hostesses with regard to the way they are courteous, whether they give passengers comfort, how they serve drinks and snacks, the way they provide information to passengers about available facilities and course of the route, and whether they play videos preferred by passengers.

The questionnaire also finds out if management and other Greyhound employees pay attention to passenger concerns and complaints, whether they attend to problems on time, if they have expertise to update waiting passengers and expertise to deal with passenger problems. The respondents were requested to provide the information required in the questionnaire. It is believed that passengers are objective as they are the ones who feel the pain when not attended and who enjoy it when given a good service.

#### **3.6.4 Administration of the questionnaire**

The questionnaire was developed and piloted with three fellow students, two friends and four family members. It is always necessary to pilot a questionnaire because pilot studies result in modifying the questions for easy understanding by the users. The same advantage was achieved with piloting the questionnaire for this study. In this study, pilot study assisted because the changes that were made on the questionnaire after the pilot study led to a reliable tool in both relevance and transparency when administered for gathering the required information.

Convenience sampling method was used because the researcher wanted to be sure that respondents are willing and are indeed passengers. Hence, travelling with them was a sensible approach. Only those passengers who had agreed to complete the questionnaire at some point during the trip were given the questionnaire to complete.

The target respondents were informed of the survey at the Greyhound stations where the researcher was going to reach. The communications divisions of the Greyhound bus stations conveyed the information about this study to reduce conflict and uncertainty when the researcher introduced herself to passengers. The researcher distributed and administered the questionnaires personally. This occurred in the buses as the researcher travelled with the respondents in the buses.

In those buses that the researcher used for this study, formal communication by Greyhound was made and passengers were requested to fill in the questionnaires. The idea was that the passengers who refused to participate in the research be freed from it. Also, the researcher travelled in those buses to support the endeavour as well as to explain where the questionnaire was not clear to respondents, and to encourage them to participate by showing a "pleading" face. Providentially, at the end of data gathering, the researcher was satisfied with the cooperation from all the participants.

### **3.7 Data analysis**

The main concern of this study was to determine the level of consumer satisfaction at the Greyhound, and to investigate the factors that could assist sustainability in the quality of service to satisfy the passenger transport consumer. This section explains how data analysis for this study is undertaken.

Data analysis methods used in this study include some basic nonparametric statistical methods. A computer programme, Excel, was used in the analysis. Analysis of data was based on the categorisation given in the questionnaire, namely; coaches, drivers, hostesses, managers and other employees. The numerical codes were used to show the extent of good service for each specific aspect being questioned.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

This was a quantitative study, which means that the responses were required only in non-numeric form. In the end, no numerical responses were required, and none was made in the responses. The respondents were only required to provide useful information about aspects of passenger service provision.

Even though Greyhound was the point of reference, it was simply because Greyhound is reputable for providing successful passenger services to the major towns and cities throughout the country. The results are intended to represent and serve any passenger transport establishment that could benefit from this study.

The aim is to determine the factors useful in sustainable consumer satisfying services, and also measure the level of consumer satisfaction of Greyhound passengers. The next chapter presents the observed findings.

## CHAPTER 4

### *Findings*

*The current chapter presents the findings of the empirical study, and the raw data from which these findings are taken and presented in Appendix B.*

***The objective of the chapter is:***

- *To present the study findings in detail.*

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter revealed that the survey was initially planned to use hundred (100) respondents, hence 100 questionnaires were prepared and administered “in-house” by the researcher. The researcher travelled in every coach in which respondents were filling in the questionnaires. This was to provide support and answer any questions that the respondents would ask. Furthermore, every respondent who had promised to participate in the survey completed the first page of the profile of the respondent. Unfortunately, two respondents failed to complete the remainder of the questionnaires. This was not discussed until at the data analysis stage. Hence, ninety-eight (98) questionnaires were completed to a satisfactory level, except that some respondents decided to ignore certain questions. The sentiment was that the respondents found those questions sensitive. The questions answered range from 89 to 98 respondents. The raw data are given in Appendix B.

To remind the reader, the counts given in the appendix mentioned represents the number of respondents who disagreed strongly, disagreed, indifferent, agreed and agreed strongly with a statement made at each question. The keys to the template containing raw data are also given. In an effort to maintain consistency in the presentation of the dissertation, the study findings are presented in the order of the literature review (Chapter 2) and the questionnaire (Appendix A). The survey included marking the answer given by the respondent. Data analysis started with creating of table for categories of answers. Counting the given answers from the questionnaires followed. It was done by first finding how many respondents participated in each question, and the response rate calculated out of the 98 that is expected. Data analysis also meant allocating of the accumulated counts to each different category, and then converting to percentages.

To enhance integration of the discussion, at the end of every observation/finding reported, a recap, in italics, is given to encapsulate.

#### 4.2 Profile of respondents

The profiles of respondents were intended for use in a possible segmentation of the passenger market. The response rate for this question was acceptable. The aspects used are expressed in the following table, and then discussed briefly in the subsequent subsections.

*Table A: Summary of profiles*

<b>Gender</b>	<b>92</b>	Male 31			Female 61	
<b>Race</b>	<b>90</b>	Blacks 29	Whites 21	Asians 25	Coloureds 14	Aliens 1
<b>Age (in years)</b>	<b>91</b>	20 and below 19	[20 – 30) 39	[31 – 40) 15	[41 – 50) 8	Over 50 10
<b>Frequency of Greyhound use</b>	<b>90</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> time 28	1 year 23	Over 1, less than 2 6	2 years 8	Over 2 years 25

##### 4.2.1 Number of respondents

The questions about the respondents' profiles were on the first page of the questionnaire, just below the covering letter. All the 100 respondents completed the profile section, but two of them did not complete the other sections inside the questionnaire. As the sections in the questionnaire contained were the questions that deal with passenger satisfaction, not answering them rendered the responses not useful. Therefore, only 98 questionnaires (which is 98% of the originally expected responses) were considered completed. Therefore the maximum response for all the questions is 98.

##### 4.2.2 Gender of the respondents

Some respondents did not indicate their gender, and it is felt that they found it sensitive to tell if they are male or female. Considering the 98 who completed the questionnaires, only 92 respondents disclosed their gender. Of these 31 (33.70%) showing male and 61 (66.30%) female.

#### **4.2.3 Race or alien status of respondents**

Another question that many respondents ignored is about race. Only 90 responded about the races to which they belong. Based on 90 responses, the finding showed that 29 (32.22%) of the respondents are black, 21 (23.33%) white, 25 (27.78%) asian, fourteen (15.56%) coloured and one (1.11%) alien.

#### **4.2.4 Age of respondents**

The question about age was also not popular with some respondents. Some respondents ignored this question since only 91 responded about their ages. Nineteen (20.88%) were below the age of 20 years, 39 (42.86%) were between 21 and 30 years, fifteen (16.48%) were between 31 and 40 years, eight (8.79%) were between 41 and 50 years and 10 (10.99%) were over 50 years of age.

#### **4.2.5 Duration of using Greyhound**

To the question on the length of the passengers' use of Greyhound, only 90 respondents participated. The findings revealed that 28 (31.11%) were new Greyhound users at the time of the survey, 23 (25.56%) had been using the coaches for one year, six (6.67%) had been using the coaches for over a year (but below two years), eight (8.89%) had been using the coaches for two years and 25 (27.78%) had been using the coaches for over two years.

Six (6.67%) of the respondents did not indicate their gender, eight (8.89%) did not indicate the races to which they belong, seven (7.78%) did not indicate their ages and eight (8.89%) did not indicate the lengths of time they had been using Greyhound. If an assumption had been made that the profiles described 'replicate' the entire Greyhound passenger market, then there were fewer male (33.70%) than female passengers (66.30%). Except for the "alien" market of 1.11%, the coloured community market was the smallest at 15.56%, then white (23.33%), asian (27.78%) and black (32.22%). Age-wise, the 41 to 50 years old market is 8.79%, the over 50 years 10.99%, the 31 to 40 years 16.48%, the below 20 years 20.88% and the 21 to 30 year olds 43.33%.

#### **4.3 Greyhound coaches**

More respondents answered the question about Greyhound coaches than they answered the questions about profiles, and some respondents chose not to answer some of the questions.

The summary is given in the following table, after which it is discussed briefly.

**Table B: Summary about Greyhound coaches**

	<b>Total response</b>	<b>Agree strongly</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Indifferent</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree strongly</b>
<b>Comfortable</b>	96	57	9	17	13	0
<b>Modern/attractive</b>	96	32	58	6	0	0
<b>Smooth pull offs and stops</b>	98	38	52	8	0	0
<b>Low accident rate</b>	89	24	39	25	1	0
<b>Punctual</b>	94	17	34	21	11	11
<b>Low breakdown rate</b>	96	8	55	37	3	3
<b>Reading material always available</b>	93	5	15	34	20	19
<b>Appropriate languages in material</b>	92	3	18	34	13	21
<b>All cultures accommodated</b>	91	15	35	31	9	1
<b>Reasonable stops</b>	93	44	39	7	3	0
<b>Handiness of coaches</b>	96	33	49	10	3	1
<b>Convenient operating hours</b>	95	35	43	13	3	1

#### **4.3.1 Comfortableness of Greyhound coaches**

Ninety-six participants responded on the comfort of the Greyhound coaches. No respondent emphasised lack of comfort of Greyhound coaches, as no one was in strong disagreement with the statement that these coaches are comfortable. Only one (1.04%) disagrees with the statement that the coaches are comfortable.

Nine (9.38%) of the respondents indicated their rating of the comfort of these coaches as “moderately” uncomfortable; they were in disagreement with the statement that the coaches are comfortable. Seventeen (17.71%) did not know how to rate the comfort of these coaches. An overwhelming 57 (59.38%) indicated that these coaches are comfortable, and another thirteen (13.54%) indicated that these coaches are very comfortable.

A concern emerged though; as about 9.38% respondents indicated that the coaches were not comfortable, and a total of 59.38% respondents suggested that these coaches were comfortable but not very comfortable. It was noted that there was a room for improving these coaches to become very comfortable. In total, 70 (72.92%) agreed that the Greyhound coaches gave comfort (at different levels) and only nine (9.38%) did not agree (also at a different level of belief).

#### **4.3.2 Modernity and attractiveness of Greyhound coaches**

On these coaches being modern and attractive, 96 (97.96%) respondents participated in the question. No single respondent indicated lack of being modern or attractive. Only six (6.25%) of the respondents to the question did not have an opinion on whether they found the Greyhound coaches modern and attractive. Fifty-eight (60.42%) indicated that they found these coaches comfortable and 32 (33.33%) indicated that they found them very attractive.

*It is noted that two respondents did not answer the question. Also, 6.25% did not indicate their opinion. The 60.42% who rated these coaches as modern and attractive but not stressing, or agreeing strongly, could be suggesting an existing room for improvement. In all, no respondent has complained about lack of modernity and attractiveness of the coaches while a huge 90 (93.75%) confirmed their satisfaction that these coaches are modern and attractive.*

#### **4.3.3 Greyhound level of smoothness during stops and sailing**

On rating Greyhound coaches as being smooth while stopping or sailing, 96 respondents participated.

Even for this category, no respondent indicated that the Greyhound coaches are not sailing or stopping smoothly. Eight (8.33%) of the respondents who participated in the question did not know where they stood on the issue. Fifty-two (54.17%) found pull offs and stops of these coaches as smooth and the other 38 (39.58%) found them very smooth.

Some passengers did not find the coaches as very smooth. It intimated a gap in the perceived possibility of higher smoothness. Overall there were no complaints about lack of smoothness of Greyhound coaches, and 90 (93.75%) accepted that the coaches stop and pull off smoothly.

#### **4.3.4 Accident rate of Greyhound coaches**

Eighty-nine respondents participated, nine (9.18%) less than the expected 98. From the 89 who responded, no respondents disagreed strongly, which implied that they stress that these coaches do not get involved in many accidents.

One (1.12%) respondent believed that Greyhound coaches do have many accidents, and 25 (28.09%) were not sure about the issue. Thirty-nine (43.82%) agreed that these coaches do not have many accidents, and another 24 (26.97%) agreed strongly that these coaches have few accidents.

The fact that there were some respondents who did not agree strongly with the suggestion that the coaches have few accidents, others not being sure and one believing that they have accidents serves a trigger for the bus company to probe the matter. On aggregate, 1 (1.12%) respondent did not believe that Greyhound coaches have few accidents while 63 (70.79%) accepted that they do have few accidents.

#### **4.3.5 Punctuality conduct of Greyhound coaches**

Ninety-three (93) respondents participated. It made this five less than the usual 98. Besides the 21 (22.58%) who are indifferent on the issue, 11 (11.83%) disagreed with the statement that Greyhound coaches are punctual, and another 11 (11.83%) disagreed strongly with the statement.

Thirty-four (36.56%) respondents agreed that the coaches are punctual and sixteen (17.20%) agreed strongly that the coaches are punctual. In this question there is even a higher number of respondents giving concern to the question of punctuality. Only a small percentage is highly satisfied. Five (5.38%) respondents did not answer the question, while 12 (12.90%) did not support the suggestion that Greyhound coaches are always punctual.

These, and the 36.56% who agreed (but not strongly) suggest that there is a gap for improving punctuality of the Greyhound coaches. In all, 22 (23.66%) agreed that these coaches are not always punctual while 50 (53.76%) agreed that they are punctual.

#### **4.3.6 Breakdown rate of Greyhound coaches**

The Greyhound coaches were investigated regarding the breakdown rate as perceived by the passengers. The question posed was whether the coaches have a low breakdown rate. Ninety-six respondents were involved, which is two less than the usual 98. From the 96 respondents who participated, only three (3.13%) disagreed strongly against the suggestion that Greyhound coaches' breakdown rate is low, and another three (3.13%) disagreed against the suggestion. Twenty-seven (28.13%) were indifferent, 55 (57.29%) agreed that these coaches have few breakdowns and 8 (8.33%) agreed strongly with the statement.

The 55 (57.29%) who did not agree strongly that the breakdown rate is low stimulate further investigation to the breakdowns of these coaches. Total counts showed six (6.25%) respondents not in support that these coaches have low breakdown rate while 63 (65.63%) showed that they have a low breakdown rate.

#### **4.3.7 Reading material in Greyhound coaches**

Ninety-three passengers responded when they were requested to tell if they found Greyhound coaches supplying reading materials for passengers to read during travel. Nineteen (20.43%) of those who participated disagreed strongly with the statement, and 20 (21.51%) disagreed. Fifteen (16.13%) agreed that there is adequate reading material and only five (5.38%) agreed strongly that there is adequate reading material in the coaches during travel.

For this question 39 (41.94%) said that the coaches did not supply reading material while 21 (21.51%) said that there was always reading material in the coaches during travel. These showed a concern about reviewing the supply of reading material in Greyhound coaches during travel.

#### **4.3.8 Language in reading material during Greyhound trips**

Ninety-two (92) passengers responded to the question with 34 (36.96%) of them failing to give an opinion. Twenty (21.74%) disagreed strongly, and another 13 (14.13%) disagreed with the suggestion that all the languages are catered for. Eighteen (19.57%) agreed while three (3.26%) agreed strongly that all languages are being catered for in the reading material.

The respondents gave a split of 33 (35.87%) who agreed that languages of passengers in reading material of the Greyhound coaches are not all catered for, while 21 (22.83%) agreed that all languages are being catered for. A possibility is that the 21 respondents are custodians of the language(s) that were being catered for while 34 (36.96%) were not comfortable with these languages. Further, the 34 (36.96%) non-participation rate was high. It could be that some satisfied passengers did not know the languages of other passengers and not sure who was and who was not satisfied about the languages of the reading materials.

#### **4.3.9 Culture incorporated in support material during Greyhound trips**

Ninety-one passengers responded. Of these, only 1 (1.10%) disagreed strongly and another nine (9.89%) disagreed with the statement. Thirty-one (34.07%) were indifferent. Thirty-five (38.46%) agree and 15 (16.48%) agree strongly that Greyhound coaches incorporate culture in their entertainment packages during travel. On average, 10 (10.99%) do not believe that Greyhound Company is catering for all the cultures, and 31 (34.07%) did not know whether to say that culture is being catered for or not.

The overall split is 10 (10.99%) of the respondents who do not believe that Greyhound caters for all the cultures in the coaches during travel while 50 (54.95%) accept the suggestion.

#### **4.3.10 Handiness of stops of Greyhound coaches**

On stops, 96 respondents participated on the question. Ten (10.42%) of them did not commit themselves to an opinion, as they were indifferent. One (1.04%) disagrees strongly while another three (3.13%) disagree with the suggestion that the frequency of stops that Greyhound coaches offer is convenient for them. Furthermore, forty-nine (51.04%) agree and 33 (34.38%) agree strongly that Greyhound stops are convenient and at preferred intervals. For the adequacy of the number of stops during travel, most (82, or 85.42%) respondents indicated that they are satisfied. Only four (4.17%) are not satisfied while 10 (10.42%) had no say about the issue.

Even though there is no serious danger about the number of stops, there is a small sign that stops could be improved. In total, only four (4.17%) do not believe that the coaches are not convenient enough while 82 (85.42%) find the Greyhound coaches' stops convenient.

#### **4.3.11 Operating hours of Greyhound coaches**

On operating hours, 95 respondents participated. Thirteen (13.68%) of these did not know where they stand on the issue.

One (1.05%) respondent disagree strongly, and three (3.16%) disagree with the statement that operating hours are convenient. Forty-three (45.26%) agree and 35 (36.84%) agree strongly that operating hours are convenient for the passengers. There is a significant satisfaction rate of 75 respondents, or 78.95% with 13 (13.68%) not responding and four (4.21%) registering dissatisfaction. There are not many inciters that stimulate further investigation on the operating hours. There are only four (4.21%) respondents who find Greyhound coaches' operating hours not convenient enough while 78 (82.11%) find the operating hours convenient.

#### 4.4 Greyhound drivers

The questionnaire addressed the Greyhound drivers' conduct as well. A few aspects about the question are given below.

**Table B: Summary about Greyhound drivers**

	<b>Total response</b>	Agree strongly	Agree	Indifferent	Disagree	Disagree strongly
Polite	<b>95</b>	35	45	12	2	1
Conduct good	<b>94</b>	30	49	12	2	1
Passenger care	<b>95</b>	42	45	7	0	1
Stable driving	<b>94</b>	39	48	7	0	1
Considerate/ sober	<b>94</b>	34	50	9	0	1
Empathy with traffic officials	<b>94</b>	41	33	19	0	0
Protect other passenger	<b>96</b>	19	50	25	2	0

#### **4.4.1 Politeness of Greyhound drivers**

Ninety-five respondents responded to the question that Greyhound drivers are polite, and twelve (12.63%) withheld their responses. Only 1 (1.05%) disagreed strongly and two (2.11%) disagreed against the statement that Greyhound drivers are polite. Forty-five (47.37%) agreed and 35 (36.84%) agreed strongly that Greyhound drivers are polite. There is an 84.21% overall acceptance rate (which is 80 respondents) that Greyhound drivers are polite with only three (3.16%) in disagreement.

Greyhound drivers demonstrate a pleasing conduct according to most respondents. Only 3 (3.16%) passengers classify Greyhound drivers as not polite, while 80 (84.21%) find drivers as polite.

#### **4.4.2 Drivers' conduct regarding road signs**

Ninety-four passengers responded to the question; with 12 (12.77%) failing to respond. Only 1 (1.06%) disagrees strongly and 2 (2.13%) disagree with the statement that Greyhound coach drivers observe road traffic signs. Forty-nine (52.13%) agree, and 30 (31.91%) agree strongly that these drivers observe the road traffic signs. The manner in which Greyhound drivers observe traffic signs while driving is appreciated by 79 (84.04%) respondents. Only 3 (3.19%) indicate that drivers do not observe traffic signs. Twelve (12.77%) did not give an opinion.

Three (3.19%) indicate that drivers do not observe that traffic signs while 79 (84.04%) indicate that drivers observe traffic signs.

#### **4.4.3 Drivers' care towards passengers**

Ninety-five passengers responded to this question and 7 (7.37%) did not indicate their impression. Only 1 (1.05%) respondent disagrees strongly while no respondent is in disagreement with the statement that Greyhound drivers care for passenger safety. Forty-five (47.37%) agree and 42 (44.21%) agree strongly that Greyhound drivers care about the safety of passengers. Only 1 (1.05%) respondent has a complaint while 87 (91.58%) accept that these coaches are safe.

Only one (1.05%) does not agree that the Greyhound drivers care for passenger safety while 87 (91.58%) indicate that drivers care about passenger safety.

#### **4.4.4 Greyhound drivers' stability while driving**

Ninety-four passengers responded, but not a single one participant indicated their displeasure as no one is in disagreement or disagreed strongly with the statement that these drivers are stable and experienced. Except 7 (7.45%) respondents that were indifferent on the issue, all the others support the suggestion that these drivers demonstrate stability and experience. Forty-eight (51.06%) agree and 39 (41.49%) agree strongly that Greyhound drivers show stability and experience in their driving. The respondents were positive that Greyhound drivers are experienced and stable in driving. As 7 (7.45%) could not give an opinion, 87 (92.55%) find these drivers stable and experienced in driving.

Not one respondent doubts the stability and experience of the Greyhound drivers while 87 (92.55%) agree that the drivers are stable on the road, and experienced.

#### **4.4.5 Greyhound driver's considerate and sober habits**

Ninety-four passengers responded with nine (9.57%) failing to take a stand. Only 1 (1.06%) respondent disagrees strongly while no one disagrees at ordinary level that Greyhound drivers are sober and considerate. Fifty (53.19%) agree and 34 (36.17%) agree strongly that Greyhound drivers are always sober and considerate. Again, the respondents regard drivers as highly sober and considerate. While 9 (9.57%) did not respond and 11 (11.06%) indicate no agreement, a huge 84 (89.36%) respondents indicate agreement that Greyhound drivers are always sober and considerate.

Only 1 (1.06%) respondent indicates that drivers of Greyhound coaches are not always sober and considerate while 84 (89.36%) indicate the contrary.

#### **4.4.6 Greyhound drivers' empathy with traffic officers**

Ninety-three passengers responded to the question. While 19 (20.43%) passengers failed to indicate their impression about the issue, no single respondent disagreed strongly or disagreed with the suggestion that Greyhound coach drivers ever offend traffic officers or fail to observe their instructions. Thirty-three (35.48%) agree and 41 (44.09%) agree strongly that Greyhound coach drivers do always observe instructions given by the traffic officers on the road at any stage of their driving. These findings support the original suggestion that Greyhound drivers observe traffic signs on the road.

No respondents registered a complaint about Greyhound coach drivers failing to cooperate with traffic officers while 74 (79.57%) indicate that the drivers cooperate well during travel.

#### 4.4.7 Protection of passenger by Greyhound drivers

Ninety-five passengers responded and 25 (26.04%) were indifferent. No passenger disagreed strongly with the statement that drivers do not give protection when unruly passengers trouble them during travel, and 2 (2.08%) disagree with the statement. Fifty (52.08%) passengers agree and 19 (19.79%) agree strongly that Greyhound coach drivers provide passengers with protection against troublesome ones when it occurs during travel. A high 69 (71.87%) of respondents agree that Greyhound drivers intervene in favour of offended passengers if other passengers give them problems. Twenty-five (26.04%) others did not give their opinion.

In general, Greyhound drivers are believed by many respondents to be professional and performing well on the road during travel, with a few exceptions.

#### 4.5 Greyhound stewards and hostesses

**Table C: Summary about Greyhound stewards and hostesses**

	<b>Total response</b>	Agree strongly	Agree	Indifferent	Disagree	Disagree strongly
Good conduct	97	29	55	9	3	1
Provide comfort	97	30	55	10	2	0
Serve snacks graciously/politely	96	38	52	4	1	1
Inform about facilities	96	40	48	5	3	0
Inform about road	93	27	48	11	8	2
Play good videos	96	24	34	22	12	4

#### **4.5.1 Stewards and hostesses conduct during travel**

Ninety-seven passengers responded to this question. Out of these, nine (9.28%) did not give their opinion. Only 1 (1.03%) disagrees strongly and three (3.09%) disagree with the statement that Greyhound stewards and hostesses are courteous. Fifty-five (56.70%) respondents agree and another 29 (29.90%) agree strongly that Greyhound stewards and hostesses are courteous.

Greyhound stewards and hostesses are believed to be courteous by 84 (86.60%) of the respondents, only 4 (4.12%) do not agree and 9 (9.28%) did not give an opinion.

On aggregate, 4 (4.12%) respondents express that Greyhound stewards and hostesses are not courteous, 84 (86.60%) express the contrary view and 9 (9.28%) did not give an opinion.

#### **4.5.2 Level of comfort given by stewards and hostesses**

Ninety-seven passengers answered the question that stewards and hostesses provide comfort to passengers during travel. No passenger indicated strong disagreement, while only 2 (2.06%) are in disagreement with the statement. Ten (10.31%) passengers did not indicate agreement or disagreement about the issue. Fifty-five (56.70%) agree and 30 (30.93%) agree strongly that Greyhound stewards and hostesses provide comfort to passengers during travel. A consistent response rate to the question about stewards and hostesses giving 85 (97.63%) respondents agree that stewards and hostesses provide comfort to the passengers. Only 2 (2.06%) disagree and 10 (10.31%) did not take a stand.

On this aspect, only 2 (2.06%) respondents do not agree that stewards and hostesses keep passengers comfortable while 85 (87.63%) find this to be true.

#### **4.5.3 Drink and snack service by Greyhound stewards and hostesses**

Ninety-six passengers responded to the question that stewards and hostesses serve drinks and snacks politely to passengers, and 4 (4.17%) did not indicate where they stand on the issue. Only 1 (1.04%) respondent disagreed strongly and another one (1.04%) showed disagreement with the statement.

Fifty-two (54.17%) passengers agree and 38 (39.58%) agree strongly that Greyhound stewards and hostesses serve passengers with drinks and snacks with a polite mood and expression. The agreement that stewards and hostesses are polite when serving drinks and snacks is overwhelming at 88 (93.65%), only 2 (2.08%) not in agreement and 4 (4.17%) abstaining from giving an opinion.

Overall, only 2 (2.08%) respondents do not agree that Greyhound stewards and hostesses serve drinks and snacks politely while 90 (93.75%) agree with the statement.

#### **4.5.4 Stewards and hostesses information about facilities**

Ninety-six passengers responded to this question. Five (5.21%) respondents failed to take a stand on stewards and hostesses providing information to them about available facilities in the coach during travel. Only 3 (3.13%) respondents disagree while not a single one is in strong disagreement with the statement that stewards and hostesses provide passengers with information about facilities in the coach.

Forty-eight (50%) respondents agree and 40 (41.67%) agree strongly that stewards and hostesses provide the information. Stewards and hostesses are seen by 88 (91.67%) respondents as assisting with relevant information about available facilities in the coaches.

In all, only three (3.13%) do not accept that Greyhound stewards and hostesses provide passengers to a satisfactory level with information about facilities that are available in the coaches during travel while 88 (91.67%) have the opposite view.

#### **4.5.5 Stewards and hostesses information about the road**

Ninety-three (94.90%) passengers responded to the question that hostesses provide information about the course of the route, and eleven (11.83%) passengers could not indicate if the stewards and hostesses provide or fail to provide the information. Two (2.15%) passengers disagree strongly, and eight (8.60%) disagree with the statement.

Forty-five (48.39%) agree and 27 (29.03%) agree strongly that stewards and hostesses provide them with information about the course of the route. Stewards and hostesses provide information about the route at a high rate according to 72 (77.42%) respondents, ten (10.75%) disagree and eleven (11.83%) abstained from giving an opinion.

On the information about the route, ten (10.75%) maintain that Greyhound stewards and hostesses do not supply the information while 72 (77.42%) maintain that these people do indeed provide the information to the passengers as required.

#### **4.5.6 Videos played by stewards and hostesses during travel**

Ninety-six (97.96%) respondents responded to the question that stewards and hostesses always play good videos for passengers during travel and 22 (23.16%) were indifferent.

Four (4.21%) disagreed strongly and 12 (12.63%) disagree with the suggestion that Greyhound passengers play good videos for the passengers during travel. On the support side, 34 (35.79%) passengers agree and 23 (24.21%) agree strongly. Fifty-seven (59.00%) respondents state that stewards and hostesses supply entertainment fairly well using video, 22 (23.16%) did not give their opinion and another 22 (23.16%) respondents were not happy with the videos played in Greyhound coaches during travel.

Wholly, in entertainment by use of video, 16 (16.84%) disagree that Greyhound stewards and hostesses play good videos, while 67 (60.00%) declare that they receive the entertainment every time they use these coaches.

#### 4.6 Greyhound management and other employees

*Table D: Summary about Greyhound management and other employees*

	<b>Total response</b>	Agree strongly	Agree	Indifferent	Disagree	Disagree strongly
Attend to passenger queries	<b>93</b>	15	37	29	6	6
Quick to address passenger problems	<b>93</b>	12	34	37	8	2
Give care to passengers at waiting stations	<b>95</b>	19	34	28	9	5
Level of their expertise is high	<b>96</b>	24	45	21	4	2

##### 4.6.1 Greyhound management and other employees' dealing with queries

Ninety-three passengers answered the question that the management of Greyhound listens to passenger complaints, but 29 (31.18%) of these did not take a stand. Six (6.45%) passengers disagree strongly, another six (6.45%) are in disagreement with the statement, 37 (39.78%) agreed and 15 (16.13%) agree strongly that Greyhound management always listen to passenger complaints and concerns.

Twelve (12.90%) who indicate that Greyhound does not deal promptly with passenger complaints and concerns trigger the company to review its position. Only 52 (55.91%) are satisfied that management is convincing in addressing passenger queries.

In review, 12 (12.90%) passengers declare that Greyhound management does not listen to passenger complaints while 52 (55.91%) accept that management does listen.

#### **4.6.2 Greyhound management and other employees' dealing with passenger problems**

Ninety-three passengers responded to the question that management and other employees address passenger problems without wasting time and 37 (39.78%) were indifferent. Two (2.15%) respondents are in strong disagreement, eight (8.60%) are in disagreement with the statement, 34 (36.56%) passengers are in agreement and 12 (12.90%) are in strong agreement with the statement that Greyhound management addresses passenger problems and concerns without hesitation or waste of time. Ten (10.75%) passengers indicate that management wastes time when they are required to address passenger problems. Only 46 (47.46%) are satisfied and 37 (39.78%) abstained from responding to this question.

Ten (10.75%) respondents state that Greyhound management does not attend to passenger queries and problems while 46 (49.46%) agree that management does attend to them.

#### **4.6.3 Greyhound management and other employees' dealing with passengers at stations**

Ninety-five passengers responded to the question that other employees keep passengers updated and informed while waiting for the coaches at Greyhound stations, and 28 (29.47%) did not indicate where they stand.

Only five (5.26%) passengers are in strong disagreement with the statement that Greyhound management and other employees keep passengers informed and updated while waiting for coaches at the stations, and 9 (9.47%) disagree with the statement. Thirty-four (35.79%) agree and 19 (20.00%) agree strongly that other employee keep passengers updated and well informed. Respondents are convinced that employees provide updates fairly high at 53 (55.79%) respondents, 28 (29.47%) abstained and 14 (14.73%) are not satisfied with employee information and updates.

Fourteen (14.74%) respondents indicate that Greyhound employees do not provide information and updates to waiting passengers in the stations while 53 (55.79%) hold the contrary view.

#### **4.6.4 Expertise level of other Greyhound support employees**

Ninety-six passengers responded with 21 (21.88%) of them not being sure whether these employees really have the required expertise to deal with passengers. Only two (2.08%) of the respondents disagree strongly and four (4.17%) are in disagreement with the statement that the other employees of Greyhound have the necessary expertise to deal with passenger issues. This closes the research findings.

Six (6.25%) respondents do not agree that Greyhound employees have the expertise to support passengers with their needs, while 69 (71.88%) agree that this is the case.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

The covering letter of the questionnaire indicated that answers are purely the opinions of the respondents. Therefore, the above findings presented the perceptions and experiences of the passengers who responded. Perceptions play an important role in behavioural studies; including where customer satisfaction is involved.

This study is about passenger satisfaction. Passenger satisfaction is necessary for marketing and positioning the service, and in developing new services. In this study, these perceptions can be useful in rethinking the services not being offered, or being offered to sub-standards levels when the passengers need them. Services such as provision of reading materials and incorporation of culture could be reviewed if required by the passengers.

## CHAPTER 5

### *Interpretation of the results*

*This chapter interprets and discusses the findings presented in the previous chapter.. For a holistic use of the resources incorporated in this dissertation, comparison of these findings with theory and data of Chapter 2 is made. The rationale is to pledge a necessary link between theory and practice as theory is required for worthy (or good) practice, while different practices are needed to adapt and advance theory.*

*Presentation of this chapter follows the pattern used in the questionnaire. The sequence of its sections is: Profile of respondents and market segmentation, Greyhound coaches, Greyhound drivers' conduct, Greyhound stewards and hostesses conduct, management and other employees, and customer satisfaction level.*

*This study is expected to expose passenger concerns that should be addressed to enhance passenger satisfaction. Aspects that need urgent attention are pointed out. Some elements need urgent and serious attention, while others require attention but gradually and with less urgency but still serious. The presentation of sections 5.2 to 5.5 is intended to highlight these points. These sections are listed as bullet points, and the most serious ones will be listed first. This is aimed at assisting the users of this research to find prioritisation of activities easily.*

#### ***The objective of the chapter is:***

- *To interpret the study findings presented in the previous chapter..*

### **5.1 Profile of respondents and market segmentation**

In Section 2.3 of the literature review, theory suggested that all the market segments should be accessible, and should serve as market segmentation basis and descriptor. Furthermore, the segments should be large enough to warrant attention for service planning and rendering, and be stable.

*The findings indicated that:*

- ◆ *According to gender, the male market segment of 33.30% was far lower than the female market segment of 66.70%. This points to a small subdivision of the males, and could have implied that a segment should not be formed separately for the males. Nonetheless, the gender differences are not analysed further in the study.*

- ◆ *Except for the “alien” passenger market, according to race, the coloured market was the smallest at 15.56% compared to 23.33% of the whites, 27.78% of the asians and 32.22% of the blacks. The 1.11% alien market was difficult to consider because the people forming this market come from outside the country. The coloured market segment was small compared to other market segments, which were comparable against one another. If grounds could be found to merge coloureds with aliens, that market could lead to a “miscellaneous” market segment.*
  
- ◆ *Profiles about age showed the 41 to 50 year-old market segment as the smallest at 8.79%, followed by 10.99% market segment of the over 50 year-old's, 16.48% of the 31 to 40 year-old's, 20.88% of the under 20 year-old's and 42.86% of the 21 to 30 year-old's. The 41 to 50 year-old market and the over 50 year-olds were both small. They could be merged to make the segment for the over 40 year-old's.*
  
- ◆ *Lastly, passengers' history of use of the Greyhound coaches showed fewest passengers as those who used the coaches for one to below two years at 6.67%. The others were 8.89% passengers who used the coaches for exactly two years, 25.56% who used the coaches for exactly one year, 27.78% who used the coaches for over two years and 31.11% who were using the coaches for the first time.*

Use of the paragraph stated at the beginning of the section is made. The profile using the market segment based on length of use of the coaches was not accessible, while market segments according to other criteria were accessible. The segment according to gender justified the female market as a market of a large enough size, but the tiny male segment is not so satisfactory.

Furthermore, the alien and the coloured markets could be left unrecognised as market segments, or action should be taken to increase their sizes as market segments.

Length of use is not a stable market segment, while age, gender and race are stable because of the behaviour associable with these characteristics. However, even though “length of use” did not have appealing properties for market segmentation, it informed the audiences about return users. First time users were the highest, and not those who had been using the coaches for over two years. This criterion also fell short of explaining the frequency of use. For example, a person who was using the coach for the second time after having used it only once “five years ago” still considered her-/himself a user who used it for over two years.

## 5.2 Greyhound coaches

In recapitulating Section 2.4 from the literature review about design and appearance of a passenger transport, the requirements were that there should be few or no complaints about the desirable elements, comfort, modern and attractive appearances. In contrast, there should be praise or appreciation that these elements are taken care of with excellence by the company being studied.

*The findings indicated that:*

- ◆ *Most passenger complaints, 41.94%, were that there was no adequate reading material in the Greyhound coaches for passengers to read during travel.*
- ◆ *Another serious passenger worry about the Greyhound coaches was a lack of punctuality with only 23.66% respondents finding these coaches as punctual.*
- ◆ *About 22.83% respondents complained that not all the languages of the users are covered in the reading material (if on the day of travel reading material was supplied in the coach) that are found in the coaches during travel.*
- ◆ *There were 10.99% of the respondents who expressed that the entertainment packages did not incorporate the cultures of some passengers for enjoyment during travel.*
- ◆ *There were complaints also about the coaches lacking comfort, and 9.38% of the respondents registered their complaints in these responses.*
- ◆ *There was a low complaint rate of 6.26% that there was a noteworthy number of breakdowns of these coaches.*
- ◆ *Only 4.21% respondents indicated that the operating hours of Greyhound coaches were not convenient for the passengers.*
- ◆ *Lastly, only 4.17% respondents indicated that the bus stops for Greyhound coaches were either not enough or not convenient for the passengers.*

Interpreting the above points with respect to the opening paragraph of this section, there was a low complaint rate that the Greyhound coaches lack comfort. This is a design problem of coaches. Other design problems are modern and attractive looks of coaches.

There was absolutely no complaint that the coaches lacked these looks. Another element where no complaints were received from responses was about lack of smooth stopping and pull offs of the coaches. On the other hand there was a serious lack of punctuality, of reading material, of availability of appropriate languages; some moderate lack of satisfaction on matters of culture, breakdowns stopping rate and sites as well as operating hours of the Greyhound coaches as reported by the respondents.

### **5.3 Greyhound driver conduct**

From Section 2.5 it was implied that a driver's smile, friendly talk and polite attitude could "make a passenger's day". The desirable driver conduct meant that politeness, caring, being considerate and conflict resolutions were required from the drivers.

Other pleasing behaviour was the driver's full cooperation with traffic officers, showing stability and experience, sober appearance and by not offending other road users.

The findings showed some concerns about the drivers' conduct. They were as follows:

- ◆ *Only 3.19% respondents indicated that these drivers did not observe traffic signs;*
- ◆ *Only 3.13% respondents classified Greyhound drivers as not polite;*
- ◆ *Only 2.08% respondents indicated that drivers did not offer protection to passengers*
- ◆ *Only 1.06% respondents indicated that drivers did not cooperate fully with the traffic officers;*
- ◆ *Only 1.05% respondents indicated that drivers did not care about passenger safety; and finally,*
- ◆ *No single respondent indicated that drivers were not stable and experienced.*

There was a low complaint rate about Greyhound drivers. However, regardless of the level of complaints, attention should be given to drivers development in full. The ideals given in the opening paragraph of this section were interpreted as complete demonstration of politeness, considerate and protective conduct.

Against the above argument, the findings showed that Greyhound drivers could be categorised as satisfactory in general, but were not completely immaculate. By addressing these problems it could lead to attracting a lost market or finding a completely new one.

#### **5.4 Stewards and hostesses**

Section 2.6 enlightened that stewards and hostesses should provide passengers with relevant information such as route conditions, available facilities in the coach and should comfort passengers. Stewards and hostesses should also entertain passengers using videos, serve them drinks and snacks politely, and generally be courteous.

*From the findings the following deductions were made:*

- ◆ *A large 16.84% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that stewards and hostesses entertained passengers with good videos;*
- ◆ *About 10.75% respondents maintained that stewards and hostesses did not update passengers with necessary information about the route;*
- ◆ *Only 4.12% respondents expressed their discontent that Greyhound stewards and hostesses were not courteous;*
- ◆ *Only 3.13% respondents indicated that stewards and hostesses did not provide satisfactory information about available facilities;*
- ◆ *A meager 2.08% respondents indicated that stewards and hostesses did not serve drinks and snacks politely; and*
- ◆ *A mere 2.06% of the respondents indicated that stewards and hostesses did not comfort passengers during travel.*

More serious complaints were the videos played for passengers during travel, and the information provision about the route by the stewards and hostesses. The other complaints were noted, but not with the level of consideration of the videos and information about the route. That is, less serious complaint did not in any way imply that an issue deserved less attention; all the concerns required full review and appraisal.

## 5.5 Management and other employees

Secondary information presented in Section 2.7 intimated that managers and other employees who had contact with passengers should demonstrate that they care for passengers. These other employees excluded the drivers, managers, stewards and hostesses. Among other things they should display were to listen to passenger problems and address those problems, concerns and also responded to questions. They should also provide information and updates to passengers, and also demonstrate expertise in addressing passenger concerns.

*The findings were that:*

- ◆ *A high 14.74% of the respondents asserted that employees provided updates to passengers in the stations;*
- ◆ *A noteworthy 12.90% of the respondents claimed that management did not listen to passenger complaints;*
- ◆ *Consistent with the above claim, a bulky 10.75% of the respondents declared that management did not attend to passenger problems; and*
- ◆ *Some 6.25% of the respondents believed that the passengers lacked the necessary expertise to address passengers.*

The criticisms labeled at management and other employees were more serious than those labeled at other employees. There was a soaring concern that Greyhound management did not listen to passenger complaints and that management failed to attend to passenger problems. Also, with these other employees, the complaints were high that they did not care for, and about the passengers.

## 5.6 Passenger/customer satisfaction

Section 2.2 pointed out that customer satisfaction leads to customer loyalty. It also implied that high frequency of complaints is a beneficial indicator of low level of customer satisfaction. Further, customer loyalty is demonstrated by high frequency of repeat purchases while lack of customer satisfaction leads to few repeat purchases. Translated to passengers as customers in this study, passenger satisfaction was demonstrated by repeated use of Greyhound. Repeat usage is expected of a transport mode belonging to a company that offered the passenger an acceptable level of satisfaction.

Market segmentation was suggested as one strategy for planning passenger satisfaction. The three tried criteria (age, gender, and race) did not seem to be accepted by the passengers. The response rates for each of these questions were not high. Either a change management approach was needed to negotiate cooperation (buy-in) from the passengers to accept these categories for use in segmenting the market, or a transport company should find geographical areas to define market segmentation according to residential regions. In the next few paragraphs these pointers are fitted to the findings.

The number of first time users of Greyhound coaches (from the responses) was the highest, compared to other users. The passengers who used the coaches for over two years were fewer than first time users, but still high compared to other categories. When combined with other repeat users, the number of repeat users exceeded that of the first time users by a wide margin. It was repeat usage of Greyhound coaches that indicated passenger loyalty.

Greyhound was considered having a serious poor service delivery in supplying reading materials, in punctuality of the coaches, in appropriate languages in the reading materials and entertainment packages, in incorporation of different cultures and in the comfort of the coaches. Some few less serious complaints were also reported about the breakdown rate, convenience that was lacking and inadequacy of the Greyhound bus stops during travel. The drivers were seen by only few respondents/passengers as lacking desired attributes. The tiny percentages (0 to 3.13%) of the respondents complained about drivers failing to observe traffic signs, lacking politeness, not offering protection, failing to honour traffic officers' instructions and not caring about passenger safety.

Stewards and hostesses were condemned heavily on the provision of entertainment by video and on the provision of information about the route. Few other complaints were also reported about a lack of courteousness, inadequacy of provision of information about facilities available in coaches, lack of politeness when serving drinks and snacks, and failure to comfort passengers during travel.

Management and other employees' depiction by the respondents was more serious. These members of the Greyhound family were criticised heavily of lacking time and willingness to deal with passenger issues and concerns. They were accused of not providing updates/information to passengers while waiting at the stations, of failure to listen to passenger complaints, failure and unwillingness to attend to passenger problems and lack of the necessary expertise to deal with passenger issues. The worst part of this criticism was that it pointed at management as well, who should serve as exemplary for passengers and other workers.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

The chapter has expounded on the statistics given in Chapter 4 about the perceptions of the passengers regarding the different elements of Greyhound Bus Services Company. There are merits and demerits about the services offered. The research did not present benchmarks against which passengers could gauge Greyhound coaches and services; hence responses were only perceptions. If a benchmark could have been employed, a possibility could have been attainment of fewer responses due to lack of adequate previous exposure to those benchmarks and higher biases because comparison is also subjective.

The problems reported in the last paragraphs will serve as a basis for the recommendations in the next chapter. Different problems have been registered at different levels of seriousness and urgency. Where problems are severe, the implication is that attention is needed urgently. Where they are not enormously severe, it implies that attention is needed with less urgency, and where there is no problem it implies reviewing to adapt to changes and to find a competitive edge against other passenger transport companies. The next chapter focuses on the problems individually as they deserve attention.

## CHAPTER 6

### *Epilogue*

*This chapter presents the conclusions made from the study, the recommendations derived and the implementation plan (or way forward) for Greyhound.*

*To ease reading, the chapter follows the sequence: Conclusions, recommendations, implementation plan, significance of the study, perceived research outcomes and further research areas.*

**The objectives of the chapter are:**

- *To reflect on the study achievements and*
- *To propose a way forward with the study accomplishments.*

### **6.1 Conclusions**

This study was undertaken to investigate passenger satisfaction at the Greyhound Bus Services Company. The purpose of the investigation was to determine controllable factors that are useful in enhancing passenger satisfaction during travel and at bus stations. There was also a specific intention to determine how these factors could be controlled to satisfy the passengers.

Literature was reviewed to lay open the thoughts of researchers and practitioners in service provision industries. Surveys were undertaken at the bus company to establish the extent of Greyhound reality with respect to existing theory. Literature is the secondary data or information of this study.

#### **6.1.1 Market segmentation**

The rate of responses did not give a clear idea about market segmentation. The sizes of the different markets could not be established due to unknown segment sizes. Not all the passengers responded to the surveys, a ceiling of 92 passengers who responded did not represent the entire market size.

Further, not all these 92 respondents provided information about the different aspects of passenger profile. Therefore, the deducted results could not be generalised for the goal of market segmentation.

### **6.1.2 Greyhound coaches**

Complaints were registered, some very serious and others less serious. In general, passengers had dissatisfactions with different aspects of passenger satisfaction. Their complaints were noted in order of being most serious to least serious as given by the percentages of complaints.

The respondents indicated that the general design and prominence of the Greyhound coaches were not completely satisfactory. The complaints were that Greyhound coaches did not supply adequate reading material for passengers to read during travel; coaches were not punctual; languages used in the coaches did not cater for some passengers; cultures were not adequately incorporated in entertainment packages; the coaches lacked comfort; the coaches' breakdown rate was disturbing; operating hours were not convenient for passengers and the bus stops for resting and refreshing were not enough. The study notes that even though such complaints were few, they remain concerns for the service provider.

### **6.1.3 Greyhound drivers**

Most passengers perceived Greyhound drivers as "doing their job properly", and going out of their way just to assist the passengers. This was supported by unanimity of respondents in rating these drivers as stable and experienced; and the very few complaints on other aspects.

In order of most seriousness to less seriousness, the complaints were that drivers did not observe traffic signs; drivers lacked politeness; drivers did not offer protection to passengers who are threatened by unruly passengers; drivers lacked cooperation with traffic officers and also that drivers did not care about the safety of passengers.

### **6.1.4 Greyhound stewards and hostesses**

Greyhound stewards and hostesses were also satisfactory to some level. However, there were two serious complaints, in order of more to less serious, namely, that stewards and hostesses did not entertain passengers with good videos, and did not provide updated information about routes.

Other complaints, less serious than the previous two and also in the order of most to least serious, were that stewards and hostesses lack courteousness; they do not provide information about available facilities adequately; they lack politeness when serving drinks and snacks, and do not comfort passengers during travel.

### 6.1.5 Greyhound management and other employees

The most rebuked groups at Greyhound with respect to service provision are the management and other employees of Greyhound. They are all fully blamed for lacking interest and expertise in listening and dealing with passenger issues. They are also perceived as lacking interest in own development for gaining interest and knowledge in handling passenger problems and other passenger issues. In brief, even though it is expected that management personnel should be the ones displaying the desirable conduct for passenger satisfaction, there is simply no exemplary conduct displayed by management. Inferentially, the deduction made from the findings is that Greyhound Bus Service Company uses the following stated calibers: Only high-quality well-behaved drivers; acceptable, but not inevitably ideal stewards and hostesses; somewhat deficiently designed coaches as well as undesirable management and other staff of categories not specified above. That is, these are the typical descriptions currently utilised by the bus company.

## 6.2 Recommendations

The recommendations are intended to close the gaps (i.e., solve problems) that exist as revealed by the conclusions.

### 6.2.1 Segmentation of the market

There is a strong call for segmentation of the passenger market, but there is no definite basis yet for such a move. It is acceptable that profiles should identify age, residential area, race, employment status, and so on; and these are worthy descriptors for passenger market segmentation. Furthermore, a computer could be used to capture the frequency of use of the coaches for every ticket buyer. A concern was raised that there is no sound base for market segmentation. To lay a base for market segmentation, the following recommendation is made:

#### ***Recommendation 1***

*At ticket purchasing, identification of prospective passengers should be required that provides information about profiles of every individual that boards the Greyhound coach. Such approach, which should also be noted and documented for use in market segmentation, could also assist in the identification of passengers when a need arises.*

### 6.2.2 Greyhound coaches

Passengers seem to be interested in reading material. They complain that reading material in the coaches during travel is inadequate. The recommendation specified above could be extended by requesting the passengers to indicate what type of reading material they would like to have, and then such material be acquired. This implies that the composition of reading material could change for every trip. However, for logistics purposes, a test could be undertaken for a short period and an average be found that could model the composition of reading material for all the trips of Greyhound. The same could be thought about languages and aspects of culture that Greyhound is denying the passengers during travel, as well as the entertainment packages.

All the declared aspects require attention for market repositioning and for increasing competitive advantage. Therefore, on the basis of the above arguments and concerns, the following recommendation is made:

#### ***Recommendation 2***

*Gather information about reading preferences, entertainment types and different cultures where possible. Then supply reading material that suits passengers, entertain the passengers as they would prefer (depending on viability) and incorporate the elements that could reflect recognition of culture by Greyhound company.*

When referring to the punctuality of coaches it refers to the coaches coming or traveling on time. If the coaches do not transport passengers on acceptable time, it could be a problem that is generated from the daily scheduling section of the company, or the drivers failing to observe the time schedule. Whichever way, it is management's responsibility to ensure that this problem is addressed.

Inconvenience to passengers by the coaches while traveling should also be investigated. This is advocated especially because it could be a health risk to sit for a long time without comfort. Another aspect is about the breakdown rate of the coaches. Breakdowns can be associated with the quality of roads used; drivers' rough maneuvering while driving, poor servicing of coaches, coaches' lack of durability and other factors. The number and sites for stopping should also be revisited and reviewed.

Summed, the following recommendation emerge:

***Recommendation 3***

*The problems of inconvenience (i.e., lack of comfort), punctuality, breakdown rate and bus stops should be addressed as a matter of urgency. A study should be undertaken to find the real causes of breakdowns. If the times for coaches to depart cannot be changed, then extra coach(es) could be used during earlier hours, or interim times between the normal travel times.*

On coach design, it may be ambiguous for Greyhound management to understand what the passengers refer to when they criticise the design and appearance. These could be the factors affecting comfort of the coaches. Furthermore, it may be impossible to acquire masses of coaches at once. Hence, more information should be sought and exact preferred coach specification should be established.

These aspects lead to the following recommendation:

***Recommendation 4***

*Survey the passengers to gather information about the preferred coach design for the majority of them and ensure that future acquisitions of coaches lean towards those specifications.*

**6.2.3 Greyhound drivers**

Greyhound drivers are generally considered to be doing well by most passengers. However, this should not lead to repose about satisfactory responses for the company. These drivers should increase competitive edge through passenger satisfaction.

A further implication is that once the Greyhound drivers are the centre of market attraction, they should receive negotiated benefits and incentives. There should also be continuous improvement of the drivers with further training and comparison with international drivers.

The following recommendation ensues:

***Recommendation 5***

*Greyhound drivers' excellence should be used for passenger attraction and as a component of the entire marketing package for the company, and be improved for competitive edge. These drivers should be rewarded for good work.*

**6.2.4 Greyhound stewards and hostesses**

Passengers condemn stewards and hostesses to some extent. They complain about the services provided by Greyhound stewards and hostesses, albeit at different levels of seriousness. These stewards and hostesses are generally accepted to be polite when serving drinks and snacks; to be comforting passengers during travel; providing information about available facilities and being courteous even though few complaints were registered. Serious complaints are that videos played in Greyhound coaches "do not serve a purpose" and that there is also no information provided by stewards and hostesses about the course of the routes during travel, which is an element that fascinates the passengers.

The following recommendation addresses these elements:

***Recommendation 6***

*The issue regarding videos, and information about the routes (as expected from stewards and hostesses) should be addressed urgently, as they show to be pressing issues. Other issues given earlier about stewards and hostesses should also be addressed, but with their priority delayed in favour of the pressing issues.*

**6.2.5 Greyhound management and other employees**

Regarding other Greyhound employees who are not in the previously stated categories, and company management, they have been reported as wholly unenthusiastic. Their conduct requires urgent attention, as they are considered to be lacking interest in passenger issues.

The following recommendation refers to management and these other employees:

***Recommendation 7***

*Management and other employees should receive training on passenger satisfaction as a matter of urgency as they have a huge influence on passenger confidence and other staff.*

To reinforce the recommendations and to make the way forward an uncomplicated one, the following section presents an implementation plan that could be followed to carry out the tasks envisioned. It is emphasised that it is not the only way, but one of the easy ways that can be followed as perceived by this study. Where the implementation plan can be improved, this study supports such initiative.

### **6.3 Implementation plan**

The implementation plan is presented with the overall desire to enhance or improve passenger satisfaction, and thus to strengthen the Greyhound Bus Services Company. The implementation plan completely supports the recommendations made in the earlier section. To strengthen Greyhound genuinely, the workforce should be the first to be prepared (trained, conditioned, etc), and then the equipment.

Furthermore, to prioritise the training schedule, empowerment should start with employees who have greatest influence. The drivers, stewards and hostesses also have contact with passengers. Therefore, they also be empowered. This will be to train them to take over from “first contact” staff, made up of both management and staff in offices.

Hence, management and staff who have first contact with the passengers (or the prospective passengers) should be the first to be empowered. In this case it also coincides well with the fact that these are the people who, according to the study findings, have the most urgent needs to be empowered. These personnel failed to satisfy the passengers in every respect. Unfortunately they are the ones who should demonstrate the finest conduct.

The proposed plan given below is not intended to be prescriptive. However, just as a guide, it follows the pattern presented of an “Implementation schedule”.

### **6.3.1 Implementation schedule.**

The proposed implementation schedule includes the following steps:

#### ***Default step: Change management element***

- Consultation by management of employee groups, constituencies and the stakeholders.

#### ***Step 1: Review study results***

- Review of the findings and recommendations of the study.

#### ***Step 2: Training needs***

- Identify and confirm the training needs of the different job categories.

#### ***Step 3: Training budget***

- Set the training budget aside.

#### ***Step 4: Find training institute***

- Find training institution(s) that could provide appropriate training for the different job categories; and
- Negotiate training customization according to Greyhound requirements and schedule, and finalise the training programme with the institute.

#### ***Step 5: Training***

- Greyhound management and staff (who have first contact with passengers such as the switchboard staff) should undergo training on etiquette, passenger satisfaction, and on coordinating tasks for other employees as well as be exposed to international and national practices of the same industry;
- Drivers as well as stewards and hostesses should also follow training on passenger satisfaction aspects and on their specific jobs (including conflict resolution), also with international and national exposure of the industry.

#### ***Step 6: Research***

- Research should be undertaken as to how often and the extent to which the passengers require protection.
  - If extreme violence is ever experienced or could be anticipated, security should be available to relieve the drivers of the passenger protection burden; and

- If the trouble given by unruly passengers is miniature and can be handled “in-doors”, it should be the responsibility of both the drivers and the stewards (and hostesses if practicable);
- Research should also be undertaken on the type, design and other aspects that refer to the coaches. Preparations for acquiring coaches in the future of Greyhound should be based on the inputs received from these efforts.

***Step 7: Consultation***

- Consultation and cooperation should be negotiated between or among the different employee categories within Greyhound.

***Step 8: Communication for quality control***

- Communication strategy should be developed for mutual monitoring and control of the plan.

This study was initiated with a purpose to have a positive impact on aspects of customer satisfaction in general, and passenger satisfaction as reference position. The study has been completed, and the following section pinpoints the study realisations.

**6.4 Significance of the study**

This research is the first of its kind at the Greyhound Bus Service Company. It is also an original initiative of the researcher. No researcher has ever attempted to pursue the idea of finding the factors that affect passenger satisfaction in South Africa in this form, focus and magnitude.

It is emphasised that this study serves to expand literature on passenger satisfaction in general, and about Greyhound as a passenger service providing company. It is also a pace setter in other studies of this nature.

The first major beneficiary of this study is Greyhound Bus Services Company. Other beneficiaries in the passenger industry include the airlines, train industries, taxi industries and any passenger transport services provider. Potential service providers and operators in any industry can benefit from the impressions given of customer satisfaction. Consultants that are involved with aspects of passenger transportation are also likely to benefit.

Furthermore, this dissertation is also intended to serve as a ready reference for interested readers and users, and could be brought into play for upgrading of passenger services.

In addition to the above details about the significance, the study has uncovered other useful aspects for passenger and customer satisfaction, and competitive edge.

### **6.5 Perceived research outcomes**

The study has exposed specific problems within the Greyhound Bus Services Company. It has shown some strengths and weaknesses within the company. Among the highlights of this study is that Greyhound management and other staff that has first contact with passengers are the worker categories that are being condemned most by the respondents. Further, the study should trigger the attention of Greyhound Bus Services Company. Greyhound should realise that it might consider itself as a “perfect” passenger service provider while passengers perceive it to be mediocre in service provision in some of its some services.

Therefore, the study makes Greyhound and other passenger transport providers aware that information should be sought from the passengers to ensure a common understanding when mention is made of good services. This same awareness applies to other service providers in all other service industries.

It was stated earlier that the study has succeeded in pointing at some of the gaps within the bus company (i.e., Greyhound). These gaps could be explored further to find and predict the changing needs of the passengers. It has also suggested an efficient and cost-effective way of gathering useful information for market segmentation, and for researching each individual segment to customise the transport services. The study could also serve as basis for researchers in other provinces and other transport companies, over and above service upgrading purposes.

The study came across some possibilities for further exploration into customer (and passenger) satisfaction matters. In the next section a few points are given as aspects of future research.

### **6.6 Further research**

The study did not focus on Greyhound coaches in and out of the bus stations other than the Durban one. Moreover, other passenger transport companies (non-Greyhound) whose coaches transfer passengers in and out of Durban were also not researched. In fact, coverage of the study excluded passengers who did not use Greyhound coaches and passengers who used other modes of transport.

The study also did not look at comparisons between the Greyhound coaches at the different Greyhound centres. Furthermore, no coverage was made of comparisons between the different bus transport companies.

These exclusions were made due the limited scope of this study, which was directed by the research objectives. The study was planned to use a case study to find insight information from an in-depth study. This was accompanied by extracting every possible detail about service provision as agreed by Greyhound management. Positive results of this study include uncovering of areas of possible research. Among others, the following list provides areas of future research.

- ◆ *Research is required for investigating the situations in other centres of operation of Greyhound Bus Services Company;*
- ◆ *Research is also required to compare Greyhound coaches in different stations;*
- ◆ *Other bus companies should be researched, and comparisons be made across the different companies. These have implications for market positioning and competitive advantage;*
- ◆ *Explorations are needed for all other passenger transport industries and comparisons be made across them to identify common aspects and differences; and*
- ◆ *Comparison should be made between passenger transport companies and service providers in general to reveal customer satisfaction factors that apply only to passenger transport.*

**APPENDIX**

**University of Fort Hare**

**Department of Industrial Psychology**

This questionnaire seeks to elicit information from the users of Greyhound Coaches regarding the extent each passenger is satisfied with the quality of the services rendered. There are no right or wrong answers. Your answer simply shows your opinion of the quality of service you enjoy at Greyhound.

The information will be treated with strictest confidence and will be used only for academic purposes. The respondents are assured that their identities will not be revealed at all, and in fact you are not even be required to write your name.

You are therefore requested to please respond as honestly as possible. Don't give your name. Hopefully, at the end of the study, it will be possible for the researcher to identify the factors that, if implemented, would improve the quality of service rendered to passengers. Recommendations regarding improvement of service quality will be forwarded to the management of Greyhound Bus Company to equip them with information that could be used to improve quality of service.

**A. PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS.**

Mark with a tick as appropriate.

1	Gender	Male	Female			
2	Race	White	Black	Asian	Coloured	Alien
3	Age in years	Below 20	21-30	31-40	41-50	Over 51
4	How long have you used Greyhound?	First time	For 1 year	For more than one year	For two years	For more than two years

In the next questions please indicate your response with reference to the scale that follows hereunder. The choices of responses are strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), neither agree nor disagree (N), agree (A) and strongly agree (SA).

**B. GREYHOUND COACHES**

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Greyhound coaches are the most comfortable means of public road transport					
2. Greyhound coaches look modern / attractive					
3. Greyhound coaches pull off and stop smoothly					
4. Greyhound coaches do not have many accidents					
5. Greyhound coaches are always on time					
6. Greyhound coaches do not breakdown too often					
7. Greyhound coaches offer reading material all the time to passengers					
8. Reading material in the Greyhound coaches is available in all the languages					
9. Greyhound coaches accommodate all cultures in their entertainment packages (such as videos)					
10. Greyhound coaches have reasonable stops to allow passengers to stretch their limbs					
11. Greyhound coaches follow operating hours convenient to the passengers					

**C. GREYHOUND DRIVERS.**

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Greyhound drivers are polite					
2. Greyhound drivers observe road traffic signs					
3. Greyhound drivers care for the safety of their passengers					
4. Greyhound drivers appear to be stable and experienced					
5. Greyhound drivers appear to be sober and considerate					
6. Greyhound drivers tend not to offend traffic officers with their conduct					
7. Greyhound drivers protect passengers against misbehaving passengers					

**D. GREYHOUND HOSTESSES.**

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Greyhound hostesses are courteous					
2. Greyhound hostesses always keep passengers comfortable					
3. Greyhound hostesses serve drinks and snacks politely					
4. Greyhound hostesses always inform passengers about available facilities					
5. Greyhound hostesses always inform passengers about the course of the route					
6. Greyhound hostesses always play good videos					

**E. GREYHOUND MANAGEMENT AND OTHER EMPLOYEES.**

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Greyhound management is ready to listen to passengers complaints and concerns with sincere interest					
2. Greyhound management is never too busy to attend to passenger problems					
3. Greyhound employees keep passengers up-to-date/informed and happy while waiting for the coaches					
4. Greyhound employees have expertise to respond to passenger problems					

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