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Incorporation of customer satisfaction in public transport contracts - A preliminary analysis

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Abstract

The design of public transport contracts provides an opportunity to define service quality standards to which an operator can be held accountable. While the specification of service quality standards is a common practice, the relationships between the specifications and customer satisfaction are often methodologically unclear. Based on a South African case study, the paper uses data collected from a group of passengers who have personal cars but choose to use public transport, and a control group of passengers who only use their cars, in the same corridor as the user group, to estimate a service quality conjoint model. The model is used to evaluate the effect of different public transport service packages, defined in terms of different combinations of service attributes, on passenger satisfaction. The paper confirms the need to classify service attributes in terms of their relative impact on passenger satisfaction, at the service design stages, where performance in respect of some attributes has a disproportionate impact on satisfaction, especially where public transport is competing directly with private transport. Practical applications and limitations of the methodology are also discussed.