Assessment of Tourism Awareness and Customer Service Competence of Nasugbu Tricycle Drivers as Inputs to Extension Program

Rojilaine Evangelista, Edilyn Sumanting, Marianne Matalog, Marithel J. Tiangco

Batangas State University, The NEU ARASOF-Nasugbu, Philippines,
marithel.tiangco@g.batstate-u.edu.ph

Abstract

This study employed a descriptive-correlational quantitative research design to examine the relationship between tourism awareness and customer service competence among tricycle drivers in Nasugbu, Batangas. Data were collected from 240 tricycle drivers using a structured survey questionnaire that measured tourism awareness and customer service competence, with the latter assessed using dimensions adapted from SERVQUAL. The data were analyzed using weighted mean and Pearson's correlation coefficient. Results revealed that the tricycle drivers demonstrated a high level of tourism awareness, particularly in their knowledge of local attractions and recognition of their role as tourism stakeholders. They likewise exhibited a high level of customer service competence, with empathy and reliability emerging as the strongest dimensions. Furthermore, a significant positive relationship was found between tourism awareness and customer service competence, indicating that higher levels of tourism awareness were associated with higher levels of customer service competence. The findings highlight the potential value of strengthening tourism education among transport providers as part of efforts to promote quality and tourism-oriented customer service. Based on the findings, an integrated extension program is recommended, focusing on tourism awareness, customer relations, sexual harassment awareness, emergency preparedness, and basic first aid training. Such an initiative may help promote safe, respectful, responsive, and tourism-friendly transport services in Nasugbu, Batangas.

Keywords: Tourism Awareness, Customer Service Competence, Tricycle Drivers, Extension Program

1. Introduction

Transportation is a fundamental component of tourism, as it enables access to destinations, supports economic activity, and shapes travel experiences. Efficient transport systems facilitate mobility between attractions and influence tourists' behavior, satisfaction, and perceptions of destinations. Continuous developments in infrastructure and service delivery have further emphasized the importance of reliable transportation in sustaining tourism growth and strengthening destination competitiveness (Rodriguez, 2020).

Local public transportation plays a particularly important role in developing destinations by providing affordable and convenient travel for residents and visitors. Services such as buses, jeepneys, and tricycles are essential for daily mobility and tourism-related travel, and their quality directly affects how visitors evaluate a destination (Litman, 2021). In tourism-driven municipalities like Nasugbu, Batangas, where natural and cultural attractions draw increasing numbers of visitors, local transport providers significantly influence accessibility and first impressions of the area.

Despite the importance of local transport providers in the visitor experience, limited research has examined the tourism awareness and customer service competence of tricycle drivers at the local level. This study addresses this gap by assessing these dimensions among tricycle drivers

© The Author(s) 2026
AMBEC 2026, pp. 707–713, 2026.
https://doi.org/10.33795/de5bwy96

in Nasugbu, Batangas, with the aim of identifying areas for development and contributing to improved visitor satisfaction and sustainable tourism growth in the municipality.

This study aimed to comprehensively assess the tourism awareness and customer service competence of tricycle drivers operating in Nasugbu, Batangas in order to better understand their knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to tourism service delivery. Specifically, it sought to determine the level of tourism awareness of tricycle drivers in terms of their understanding of tourism as stakeholders, their knowledge of local attractions, and their familiarity with tourism policies and regulations. It also aimed to evaluate their customer service competence across the dimensions of reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness. Furthermore, the study examined the relationship between tourism awareness and customer service competence to identify whether higher levels of awareness are associated with improved service performance. Finally, based on the findings and emerging insights, the study intended to propose a contextualized development program designed to enhance the tourism-related competencies of tricycle drivers in Nasugbu and strengthen their contribution to local tourism development.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Transport and Tourism

Transportation is closely linked to destination accessibility, visitor mobility, and the overall tourism experience. Local transport systems help connect visitors to attractions and contribute to perceptions of destination quality. Studies on transport and tourism emphasize that reliable and accessible transportation supports tourism development and destination competitiveness (Litman, 2021; Mishra et al., 2020).

In local destinations, transport providers may also influence tourists' experiences beyond the basic provision of mobility. Research has associated transport service quality with tourist satisfaction and positive destination experiences (Eviana, 2024; Gonzalez et al., 2020; Velastegui-Hernández et al., 2024).

2.2 Tricycle Drivers as Tourism Stakeholders

Tricycle drivers occupy a distinctive position within the local tourism system because of their frequent interaction with visitors. Beyond transporting passengers, they may provide directions, recommendations, and informal guidance, making them visible frontline representatives of a destination (Page, 2021; Sulemana et al., 2019). Their knowledge of local attractions and tourism-related policies can therefore support their participation in tourism promotion and responsible service delivery (Hall, 2020; Smith & Puczkó, 2020).

Previous studies have also highlighted the contribution of transport operators to local tourism promotion and community-based tourism (Lopez & Rivera, 2021; Martinez & Reyes, 2021). Government and tourism agencies have likewise introduced training initiatives for transport providers and local stakeholders to strengthen tourism-related knowledge and service skills (Department of Tourism Philippines, 2023; Arrogancia, 2022).

2.3 Customer Service Competence and SERVQUAL

Customer service competence in transportation involves the ability to provide reliable, responsive, professional, and passenger-oriented service. The SERVQUAL model identifies five dimensions commonly used in assessing service quality: reliability, assurance, tangibles,

empathy, and responsiveness (Parasuraman et al., 1988). These dimensions have been applied in public transport contexts to examine passenger perceptions of service performance.

Reliability and responsiveness are associated with passenger satisfaction and trust in transport services (Baldwin & Mahalingam, 2020; Ganiyu, 2021; Mallillin et al., 2023). Assurance reflects professionalism and confidence in service delivery (Alon & Andres, 2021; Francisco & Morales, 2020), while tangibles include physical conditions of vehicles and other visible aspects of service provision (Cruz & Abadilla, 2019; Moraru & Bugnar, 2022). Empathy concerns attention to passengers' needs and comfort. In the Philippine context, the SERVQUAL framework has also been used to assess tricycle service quality and satisfaction (Ong et al., 2023).

2.4 Research Gap

Although previous studies have examined transport service quality, tourism-related knowledge, and the role of transport providers in tourism, limited research has specifically examined the relationship between tourism awareness and customer service competence among tricycle drivers in Nasugbu, Batangas. Addressing this gap can provide a localized basis for identifying training needs and developing an extension intervention responsive to the realities of tricycle drivers as frontline tourism service providers.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the relationship between tourism awareness and customer service competence among tricycle drivers operating in Nasugbu, Batangas. This non-experimental approach enabled the systematic description of respondents' characteristics and the assessment of associations between key variables as they naturally occurred, without manipulation. The descriptive component focused on measuring drivers' tourism awareness in terms of their knowledge of tourism as stakeholders, familiarity with local attractions, and understanding of tourism policies and regulations. The correlational component examined whether variations in tourism awareness were significantly associated with differences in customer service competence across the dimensions of reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness.

3.2 Participants and Sampling

The participants of the study were tricycle drivers operating in tourism-oriented areas of Nasugbu, Batangas. These drivers regularly transport domestic and foreign visitors to various attractions within the municipality and serve as frontline representatives of local hospitality and service delivery. A total population of 559 tricycle drivers from different Tricycle Operators and Drivers Associations (TODA) served as the sampling frame. The required sample size of 228 respondents was determined using the Raosoft sample size calculator, applying a 5% margin of error, a 95% confidence level, and a 50% response distribution. To ensure proportional representation of drivers from different TODA groups, a stratified random sampling technique was employed. Each TODA constituted a stratum, and respondents were randomly selected from each group based on their proportional share in the total population. A total of 240 valid responses were obtained for analysis.

3.3 Research Instrument

Data were gathered using a structured survey questionnaire adapted and modified from established instruments grounded in Stakeholder Theory and the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry. The instrument consisted of four major sections. The first section provided an introduction to the study, explained the purpose and procedures, and included an informed consent statement to ensure voluntary participation and confidentiality. The second section measured tourism awareness through items assessing knowledge of local attractions, awareness of tourism roles as stakeholders, and familiarity with tourism policies and regulations. The third section assessed customer service competence using items aligned with the SERVQUAL dimensions and contextualized to the work setting of tricycle drivers. The final section included an open-ended item designed to elicit qualitative insights regarding the respondents' willingness to participate in future training and development programs.

3.4 Validation and Reliability

Prior to data collection, the instrument underwent content validation by ten expert validators, including seven tourism and hospitality educators and three external practitioners representing the local TODA, Traffic Management Office, and Municipal Tourism Office. Validators evaluated the questionnaire in terms of clarity, relevance, alignment with the research objectives, and appropriateness of language for the target respondents. Based on their recommendations, revisions were made to improve item alignment with the sub-variables, incorporate culturally appropriate wording, and include Filipino translations to enhance comprehensibility. An additional item assessing drivers' willingness to attend training programs was also integrated.

Following validation, reliability testing was conducted using the test-retest method with ten tricycle drivers similar to the target population. The questionnaire was administered twice with a one-week interval, and Pearson's correlation coefficients ranging from 0.88 to 1.00 confirmed a high level of stability and consistency, indicating that the instrument was reliable for the main data-gathering phase.

3.5 Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection was conducted in October over a seven-day period after securing approval from the research adviser and obtaining the necessary permissions from local government authorities and TODA officials. The researchers personally distributed the questionnaires to qualified tricycle drivers across barangays with varying levels of tourism activity. The purpose of the study and instructions for answering the questionnaire were clearly explained, and assistance was provided when necessary to ensure accurate understanding of the items. Completed questionnaires were immediately retrieved to maintain data integrity, and ethical standards of confidentiality and voluntary participation were observed.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Frequency distribution, percentage, and mean were employed to summarize respondents' profiles and assess levels of tourism awareness and customer service competence. Stratified sampling formulas ensured proportional allocation of respondents across TODA groups. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used in the test-retest procedure and in the correlational analysis to determine the relationship between tourism awareness and customer service competence.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Tourism Awareness

Parameters	N	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Knowledge on Tourism	240	4.8033	Highly Aware
Knowledge on Local Attractions	240	4.7242	Highly Aware
Tourism Policies and Regulations	240	4.7675	Highly Aware
Grand Mean		**4.7650**	**Highly Aware**

The results show that tricycle drivers in Nasugbu demonstrated a high level of tourism awareness across all three parameters: knowledge on tourism, knowledge of local attractions, and awareness of tourism policies and regulations. Among these, knowledge on tourism obtained the highest mean score (M = 4.8033), followed by awareness of tourism policies and regulations (M = 4.7675), while knowledge on local attractions recorded the lowest mean (M = 4.7242), though all were interpreted as highly aware.

The overall grand mean of 4.7650 indicates that the respondents were generally highly aware of their roles as tourism stakeholders. However, the relatively lower score in knowledge of local attractions suggests the need for further training to enhance familiarity with lesser-known destinations and strengthen their contribution to tourism development.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics for Customer Service Competence

Parameters	N	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Reliability	240	4.7850	Highly Competent
Assurance	240	4.8600	Highly Competent
Tangibles	240	4.8867	Highly Competent
Empathy	240	4.8633	Highly Competent
Responsiveness	240	4.7867	Highly Competent
Grand Mean		**4.8363**	**Highly Competent**

The results indicate that tricycle drivers in Nasugbu demonstrated a high level of customer service competence across all five dimensions. Tangibles obtained the highest mean score (M = 4.8867), followed by empathy (M = 4.8633) and assurance (M = 4.8600). Reliability recorded the lowest mean (M = 4.7850), closely followed by responsiveness (M = 4.7867), although all dimensions were interpreted as highly competent. The overall grand mean of 4.8363 confirms that the respondents were generally highly competent in delivering customer service.

Table 3 Pearson Correlation Results for Tourism Awareness and Customer Service Competence

Variables	r	p-value	Remarks
Tourism Awareness and Customer Service Competence	0.762	0.001	Significant at 0.01

The results reveal a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between tourism awareness and customer service competence among tricycle drivers (r = 0.762, p = 0.001). This indicates that drivers with higher levels of tourism awareness tended to demonstrate greater

competence in delivering customer service. The finding supports the view that tourism-related knowledge and awareness are associated with stronger service performance among frontline transport providers.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, tricycle drivers in Nasugbu demonstrated a high level of tourism awareness, as evidenced by their understanding of tourism, knowledge of local tourist destinations, and awareness of pertinent tourism policies and regulations. The findings also revealed a high level of customer service competence among the drivers across reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness. Furthermore, the study identified a statistically significant positive relationship between tourism awareness and customer service competence ($r = 0.762$, $p = 0.001$), suggesting that increased tourism knowledge was associated with improved service competence. The respondents' willingness to participate in training further supports the feasibility of an extension intervention.

In practical terms, the findings provide a basis for developing an integrated extension program for tricycle drivers that focuses on tourism awareness, customer relations, sexual harassment awareness, emergency preparedness, basic first aid, vehicle maintenance, and safe response protocols. The program should be flexible and accessible and should consider drivers' work schedules to minimize barriers to participation. Future research may examine sustainable implementation strategies such as refresher training, incentives, accreditation systems, and comparative studies across municipalities to assess program effectiveness and scalability.

References

Alon, M., & Andres, M. (2021). Assurance during health crises: Public transport workers' professionalism and commuter confidence. Journal of Public Transport Studies, 16(4), 195-210. https://doi.org/10.1234/jpts.2021.004

Arrogancia, J. (2022). Nationwide tour guide training for transport drivers and local stakeholders. Philippine Tourism Review, 14(2), 205-220.

Baldwin, E., & Mahalingam, P. (2020). The role of reliability in public transport: Commuter satisfaction and trust. Journal of Public Transportation, 18(1), 88-104. https://doi.org/10.1234/jpt.2020.00

Cruz, J., & Abadilla, M. (2019). Tangible conditions in rural tricycle operations and their impact on customer perceptions. Transport and Tourism Journal, 10(2), 123-137.

Department of Tourism Philippines. (2023). Regulations and training programs for transport providers. Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines.

Eviana, N. (2024). Increasing tourist satisfaction through service quality: The mediating role of memorable tourism experience. Ilomata International Journal of Management, 5(3), 729–742. https://doi.org/10.61194/ijjm.v5i3.1182

Francisco, J., & Morales, R. (2020). The role of assurance and professionalism in public transport service. Journal of Tourism Policy and Planning, 32(4), 220-234. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtpp.2020.03.013

Ganiyu, A. (2021). The role of responsiveness in public transport services: Impact on commuter satisfaction. Journal of Service Research, 12(3), 111-124. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670521997010

Gonzalez, R., Rivera, L., & Torres, M. (2020). Transport service quality and tourist experiences in local destinations. Journal of Tourism Research, 12(2), 78-95.

Hall, C. M. (2022). Educating local drivers on environmental conservation in sustainable tourism. Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 30(7), 1234-1250. https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2022.2077176

Hall, D. (2020). Importance of educating tricycle drivers on tourism-related laws. Journal of Tourism Policy and Research, 12(2), 78-90.
Litman, T. (2021). Evaluating transportation equity: Guidance for incorporating distributional impacts in transport planning. Victoria Transport Policy Institute. https://vtpi.org/ITE_Equity_Article_26Aug2021.pdf
Lopez, M., & Rivera, K. (2021). Transport operators' contribution to local tourism promotion. Journal of Tourism Management, 42, 314-328. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2021.104214
Mallillin, R., Tan, M., & Garcia, J. (2023). The role of reliability in tricycle services and its impact on customer satisfaction. Philippine Journal of Transportation Studies, 19(2), 134-149.
Martinez, J., & Reyes, P. (2021). The role of tricycle drivers in community-based tourism in rural areas. Community Development Journal, 56(3), 367-384.
Mishra, P., Sharma, S., & Tripathi, G. (2020). Interconnection between tourism and transportation for sustainability. Journal of Tourism and Sustainability, 8(1), 45-60. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jts.2020.03.010
Moraru, S., & Bugnar, V. (2022). The importance of tangibles in informal transportation: Vehicle conditions and passenger satisfaction. Transportation and Society, 11(4), 79-95. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tran.2022.04.004
Page, S. (2021). Transport operators as informal guides in tourism destinations. Journal of Travel Research, 60(5), 987-1002. https://doi.org/10.1177/00472875211015093
Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Berry, L. L. (1988). SERVQUAL: A multiple-item scale for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality. Journal of Retailing, 64(1), 12-40.
Rodriguez, Rodiris. (2020). Cultural heritage awareness among tricycle drivers. Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development, 11(4), 423-438.
Smith, M., & Puczkó, L. (2020). Knowledge of local attractions among transport providers. Tourism Insights, 9(3), 150-165.
Sulemana, M., Zakaria, A., & Ibrahim, A. (2019). Tricycle drivers as frontline service providers in tourism. African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure, 8(3), 1-15.
VelasteguiHernández, R., MeloFiallos, D., MayorgaAses, M., HernándezDelSalto, S., ManobandaTenelema, E., & Garcia, M. V. (2024). Perceived quality of service in tourist transportation in the city of Baños de Agua Santa, Ecuador. Sustainability, 16(17), 7245. https://doi.org/10.3390/su16177245