

Public Transport in Namibia: What is the customer satisfaction experience?

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Abstract

This study investigates customer satisfaction related to public transportation in Namibia. Transport plays a major role in any place worldwide, as it enables the movement of people (passengers) and goods from one point to another. Most Namibians use road and rail as their form of transport, thus this research is designed to gain understanding as to what extent customers are satisfied with the customer service they receive from the public transportation. Customer satisfaction is an essential element to staying in business in this modern world of global competition. Therefore, providers must satisfy and even delight our customers with the value of our transport services delivery, in order to gain their loyalty and repeat business. Customer satisfaction is therefore a primary goal of process improvement programmes.

To what extent are customers satisfied with public transport in Namibia? One of the best ways to find out is to ask them by means of customer satisfaction survey to elicit customers participation. These surveys can provide management with the information they need to determine their customer level of satisfaction with services associated with their public transport. Thus this information will be of relevance to the municipality as well as to the country at large, as it strives toward achieving vision 2030. The survey targeted public transport users, since they are the most affected and that is where we can get relevant data that we need to obtain.

We collected primary research data through the dissemination of a questionnaire that will be distributed to different public transport customers, namely those who are using taxis, Municipality buses, long distance buses, long distance minibuses and railways. Our sample size will be of 30 for each mode of transport, and the survey was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

The main objective of this research is to evaluate the level of customer satisfactions of public transport clients. Potential recommendations will be made based on the research outputs, to not only improve the transport service countrywide but also to implement an effective public transport system based on international standards.

Key Word: Public transport, customer satisfaction

Introduction

Transport plays an important role in today world. Civilised life depends on transport, for the movement of goods from where they are produced to where they are needed, and the movement of people from their places of residence to where they must go to pursue all activities of life. (Iles, 2005, p. 7)

Moreover transport is one of the driving tools for any economy, for it enables any country to reach development and sustainability. According to Ile (2005) populations in most developing countries are increasing much faster than car ownership level, thus due to this disproportion between these two elements, the majority of the population in those countries relay more on public transport for short journeys as well as for long voyages. In Namibia, especially in Windhoek 13% can afford and own cars, and the remaining ones (87% of the population) are using or will probably use public transportation to their disposal, namely taxis, mini buses, long distance buses and train. (MoveWindhoek, 2013)

Those figures show how segmented the market share for the public transport industry is in Windhoek. They literally indicate the fraction of customers who need to be satisfied when using public transport facilities. As transport is a service, it should be rendered according to certain standards that comply with world's class standards in order to satisfy clients in the most efficient and effective way possible. Service quality embracing reliability, punctuality, safety, convenience, comfort and security should be the first responsibility of any transport provider to his customers. (Iles, 2005, p. 379)

Problem statement

This research was designed to find out the extent to which the various forms of public transport provide customer satisfaction to their passengers or customers and how these services were provided.

Research objectives

The objectives of this research are as follow:

- ✓ Carrying out basic and applied research into all aspects of accessibility to public transport users
- ✓ Unclosing the real situation concerning customer satisfaction in the public transport sector
- ✓ Enabling the general public to be informed on and to understand current that have been experienced in the public transport related to customer satisfaction
- ✓ linvestigating appropriate solutions
- ✓ Disseminating results and work in progress to a wide an audience

Public transport

Public transport is one component of urban transport; it is a shared passenger transport service which is available to use of the general public, it has distinct modes such as taxi, mini buses and municipality bus, rail, etc. Public transport plays a very important role in the management of a city, town or country as a whole. Some of its benefits are the reduction of pollution and

congestion, the affordability of transport for people who cannot afford their own mean of transport and public transport is one of the location connectivity enabler.

Customer satisfaction

To define customer satisfaction it is necessary to understand first what 'satisfaction' is all about. Many people had come up with a definition to better describe satisfaction. It is indeed a broad concept which needs more than one perspective to be fully understood.

Cote and Giese (2000) stated that despite extensive research in the years since Cardozo's (1965) classic article, researchers have yet to develop a consensual definition of consumer satisfaction. Oliver (1997) cited by Coat and Giese (2000) addresses this definitional issue by paraphrasing the emotion literature, noting that "everyone knows what [satisfaction] is until asked to give a definition. Then it seems, nobody knows" (p. 13). Based on the perception that satisfaction has been defined, most research focuses on testing models of consumer satisfaction, while definitional considerations have received little attention. As a result, the literature is replete with different conceptual and operational definitions of consumer satisfaction (Cote and Giese, 2000).

After being aware of the paradox regarding satisfaction definition, a simple conceptual definition of satisfaction could be that it is a judgment that a product or service feature, or the product or service itself, provided (or is providing) a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfilment, including levels of under- or over-fulfilment. (Oliver, 199, p. 13)

Research methodology

Quantitative research was conducted by using questionnaire as a measuring instrument to interview different users of different public transport types. A randomly selected sample of 210 public transport passengers was drawn 30 Questionnaire distributed to each form of public transport (Taxi, Municipality bus for students, Municipality bus for worker, Rail, Long distance bus and mini buses, short distance mini buses).

The questionnaire was therefore designed in order to determine the level of customer satisfaction related to this different form of public transport, and it comprises of few closed question and few open question which are based on customer satisfaction

Findings

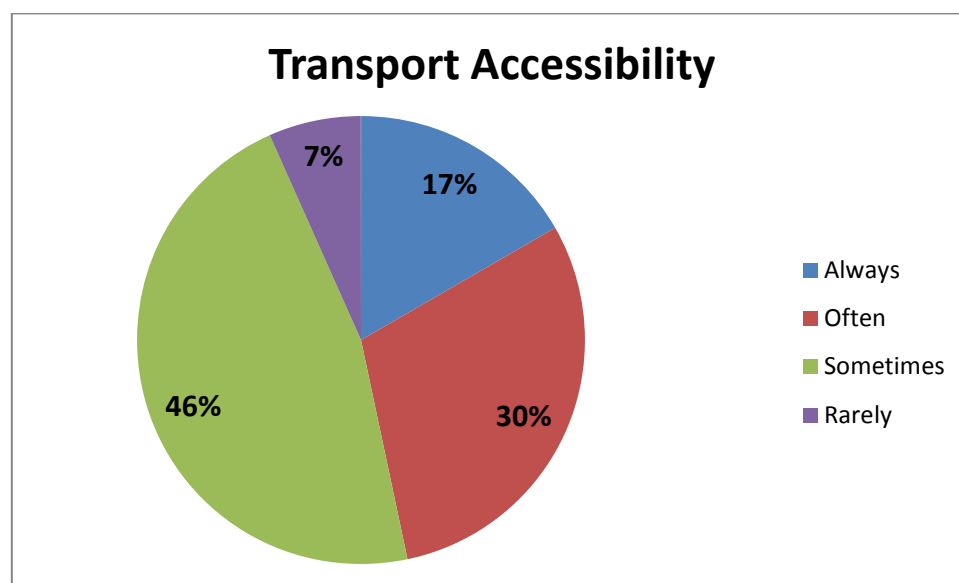
After distribution 210 questionnaires to consumers of the different mentioned mode of public transport, only 187 were returned back to us. Below are the results of the overall survey. Some challenges encountered were the language barrier; at the rail station for instance, the majority of the passengers were only fluently speaking in Afrikaans, while at the short distance mini-bus station, the majority were Oshivambo speaking. The strategies adopted were either asking

someone who does speak English and Afrikaans to help for the translation, so that we could fill the questionnaire ourselves on behalf of the person interviewed (at the Rail station), or explaining the questionnaire in Oshivambo since one of the co-author is fluent in the language(short distance mini-bus station). Another limitation was the availability of the audience, especially at the short distance mini-bus station in town, people could not respond at pick time (8am and 4 pm) because it requires a colossal effort to get into a bus.

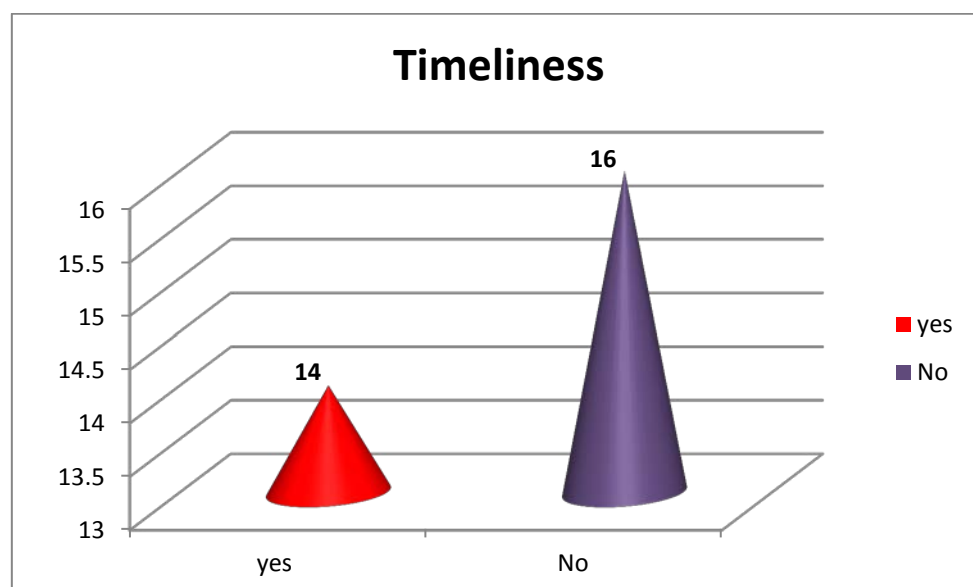
80 Taxis

30 questionnaires were distributed to taxi passengers.

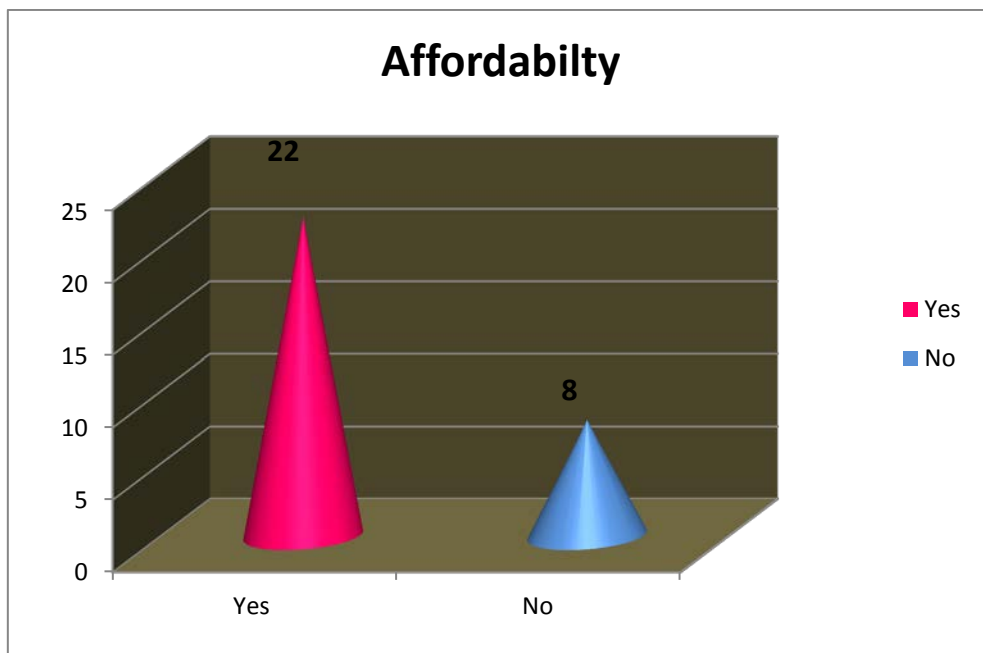
Question 3: Do you easily find public transport to your disposal?



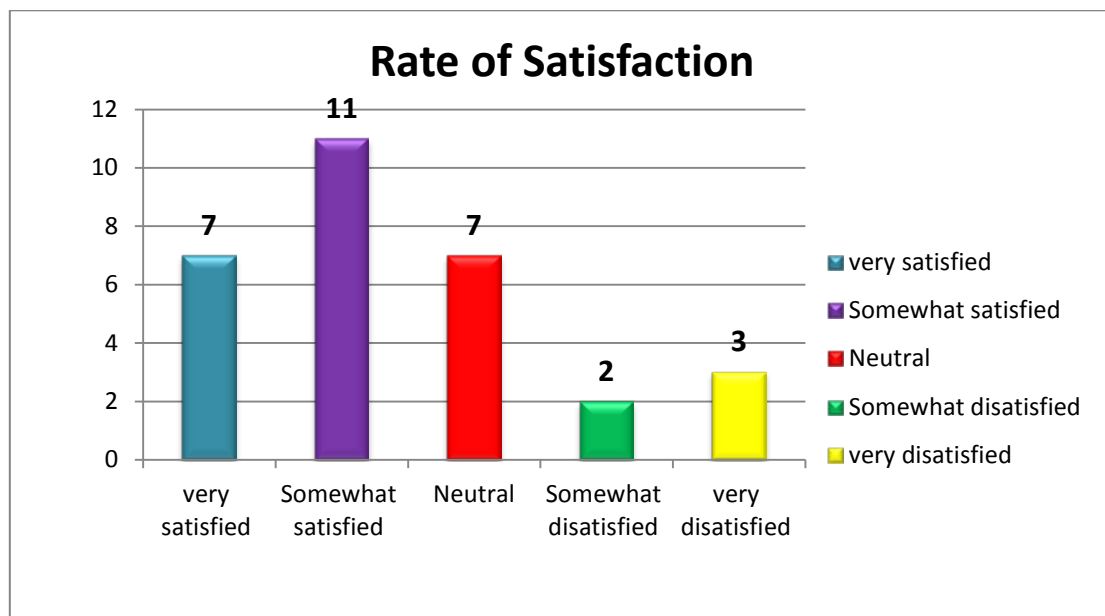
Question 4: While using this form of public do you reach your destination on time? If no, motivate your answer.



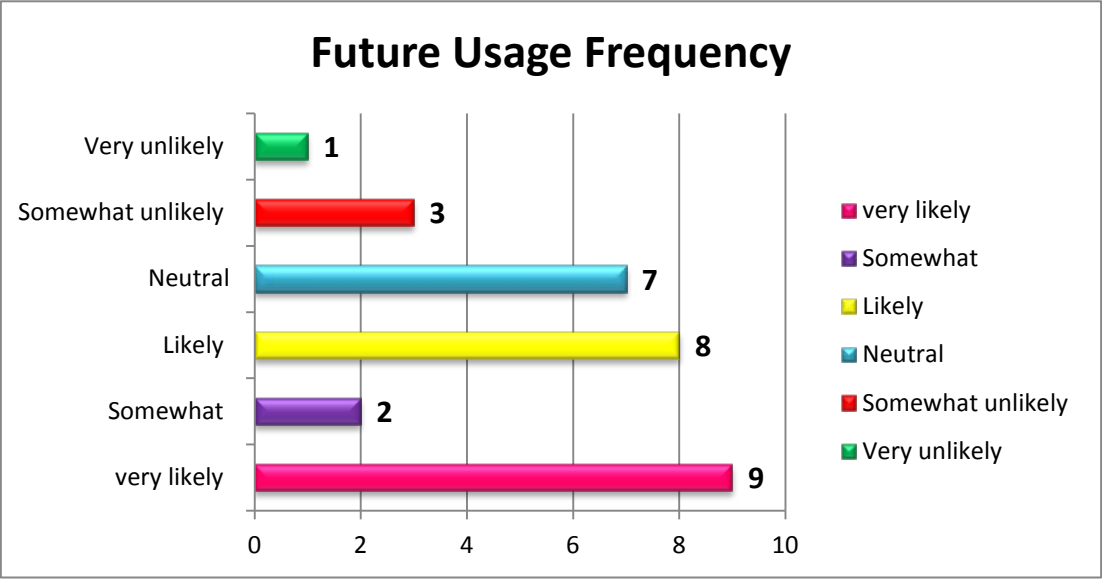
Question 5: Do you find this form of public transport affordable? If no, motivate your answer.



Question 6: How will you rate your satisfaction with that form of public transport? Kindly motivate your answer.



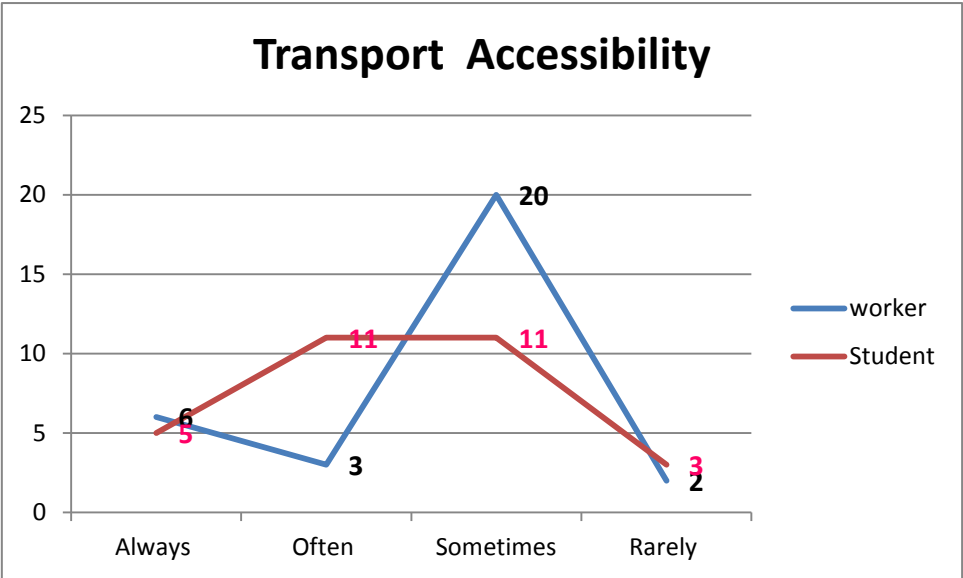
Question7: How likely are you to continue using this form of public transport?



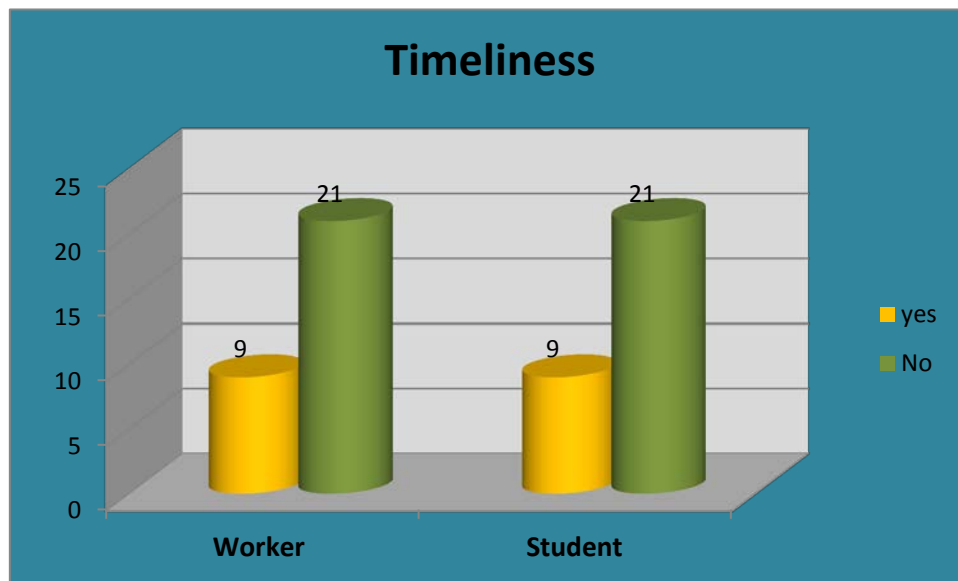
Municipality Bus (Students and Workers)

60 questionnaires were given, 30 to each type of municipality bus customers; workers and students

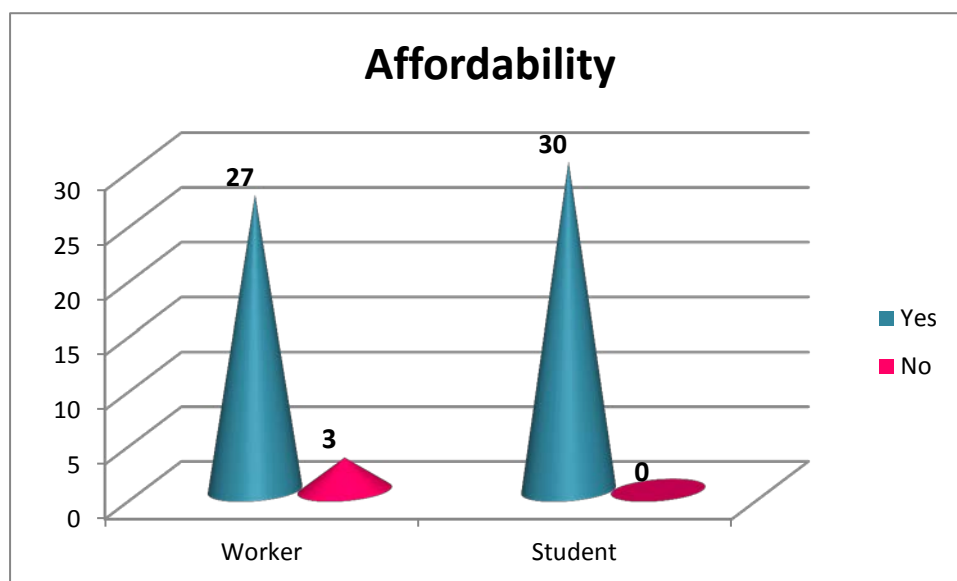
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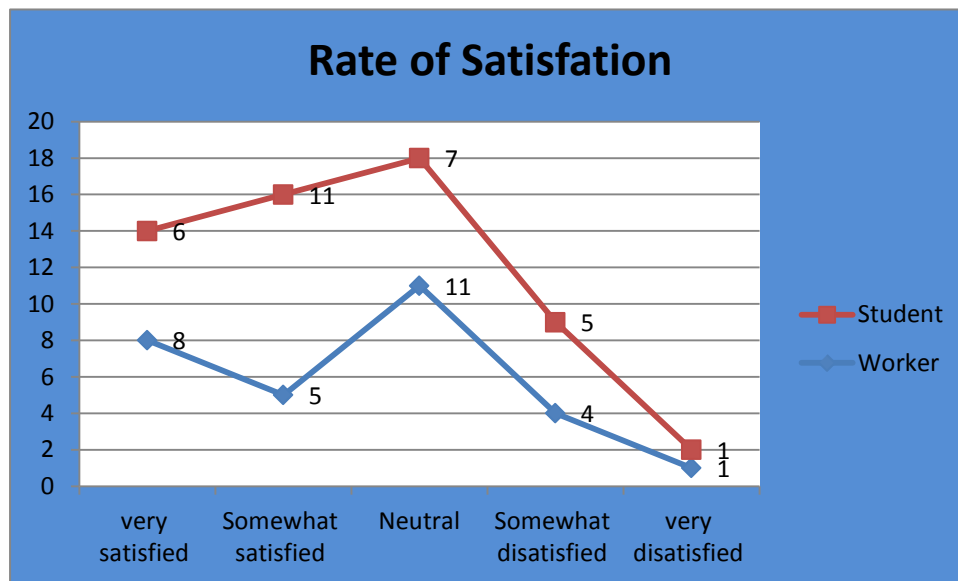
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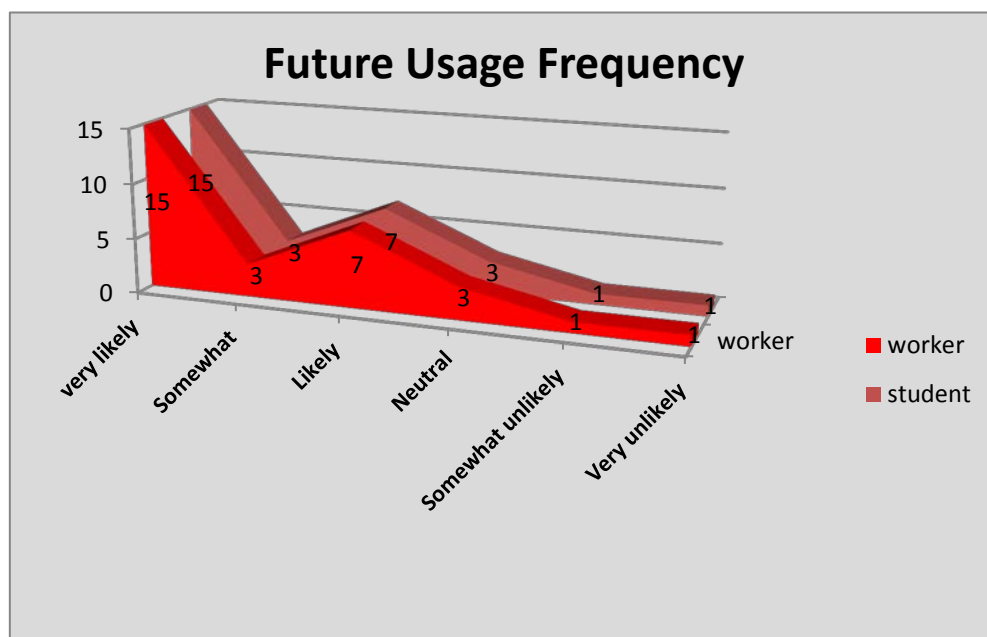
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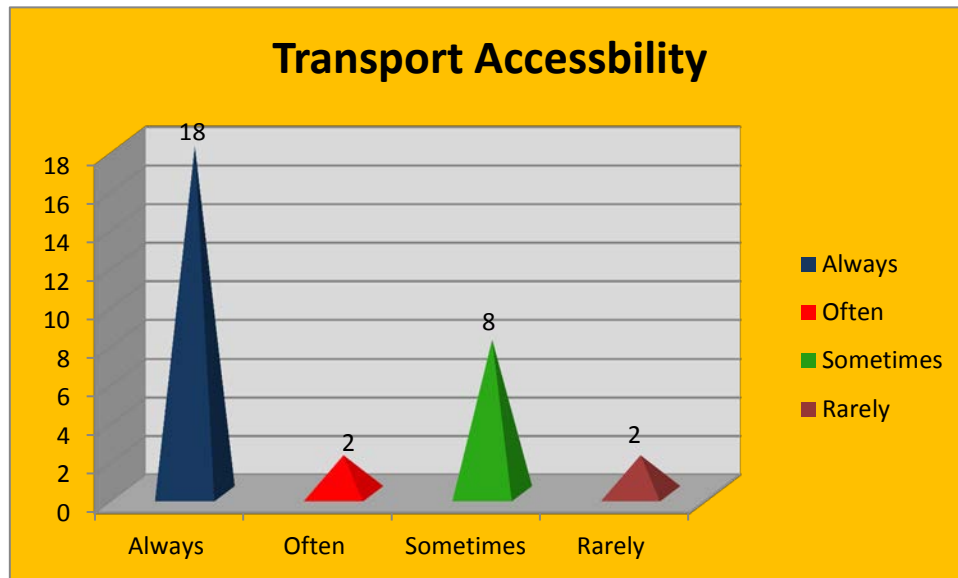
Question 7: How likely are you to continue using this form of public transport?



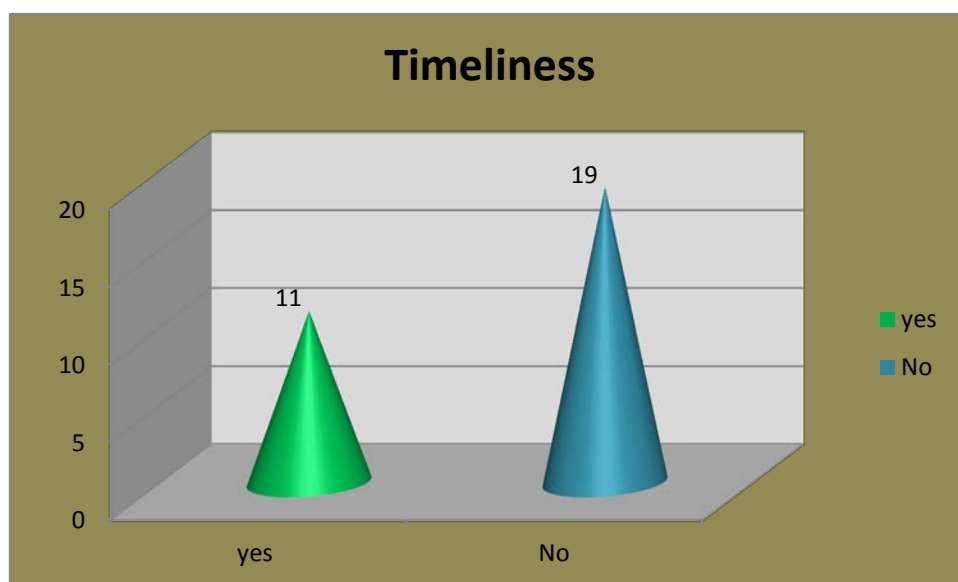
Rail

30 questionnaires were given to rail customers

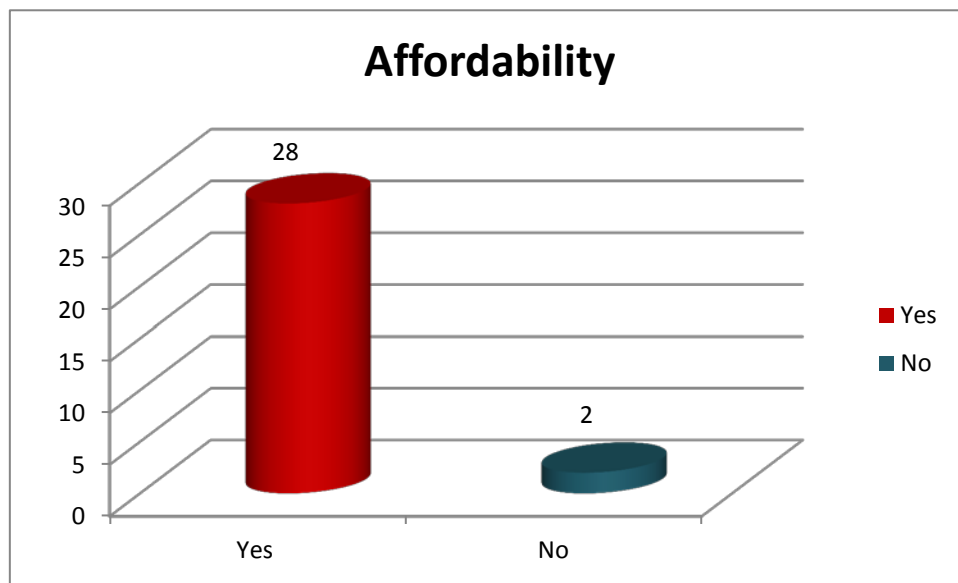
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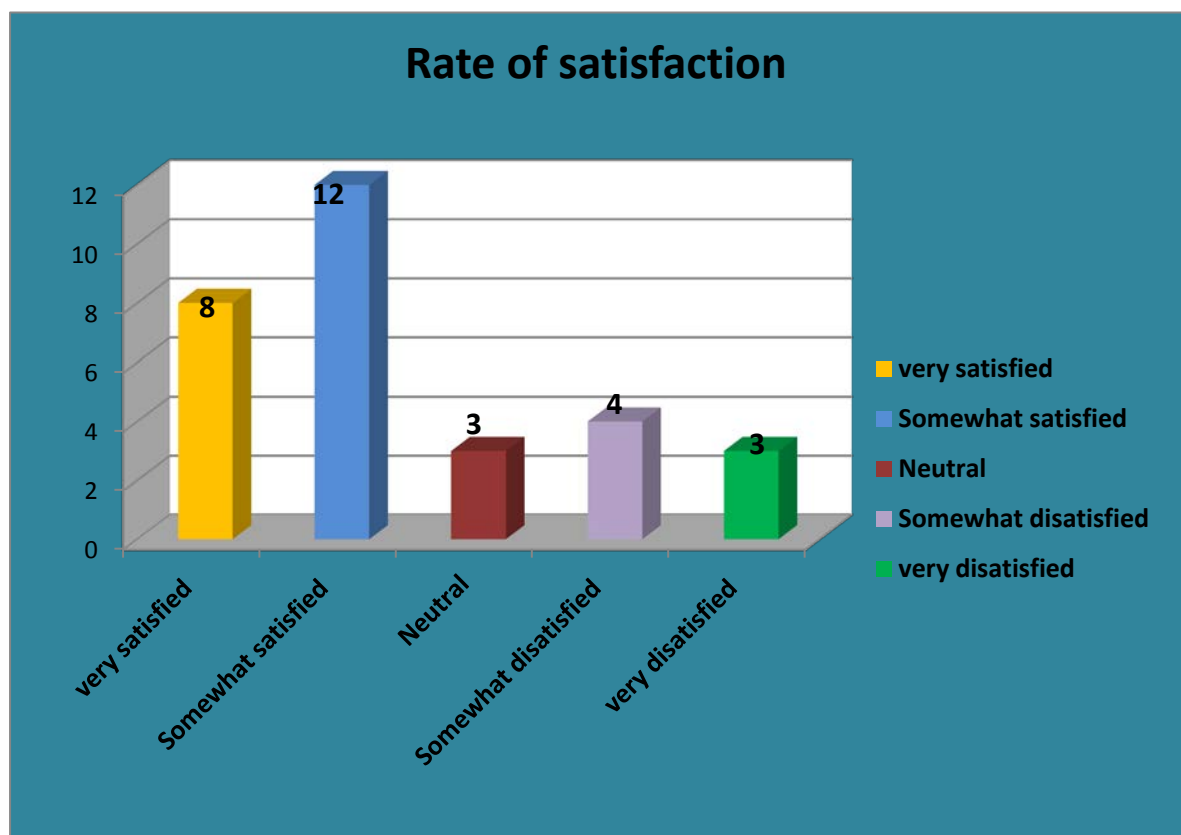
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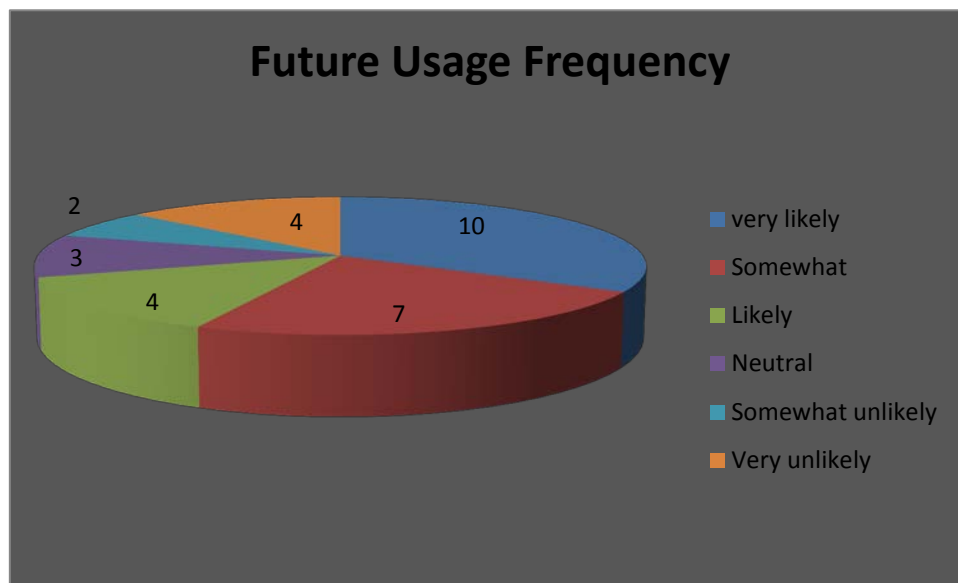
Question 5: Do you find this form of public transport affordable? If no, motivate your answer.



Question 6: How will you rate your satisfaction with that form of public transport? Kindly motivate your answer.



Question 7: How likely are you to continue using this form of public transport?

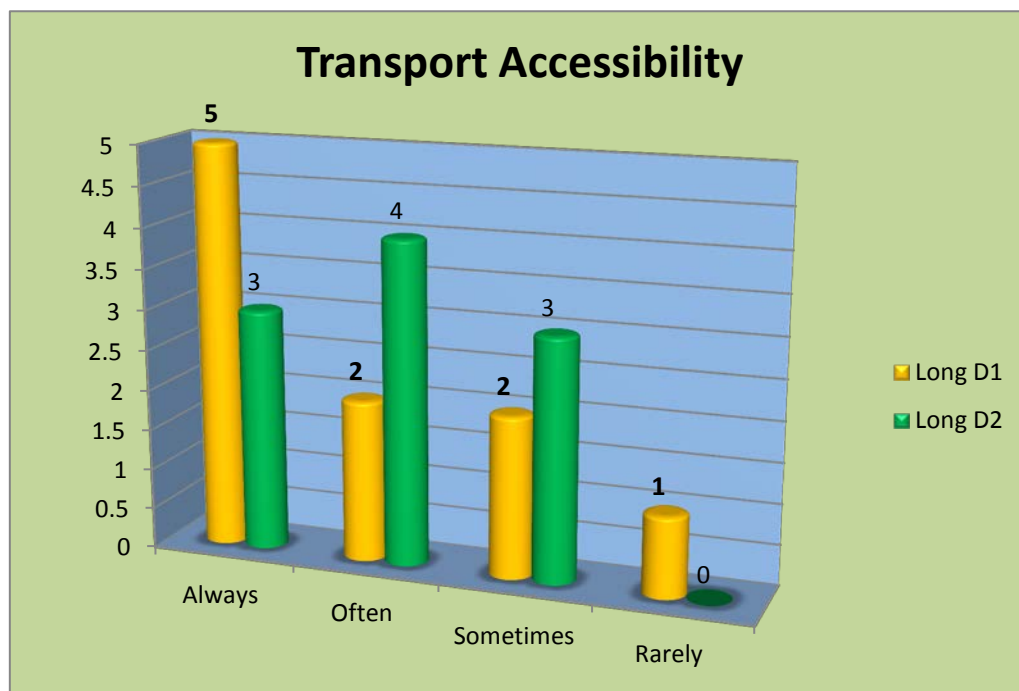


Long Distance Bus

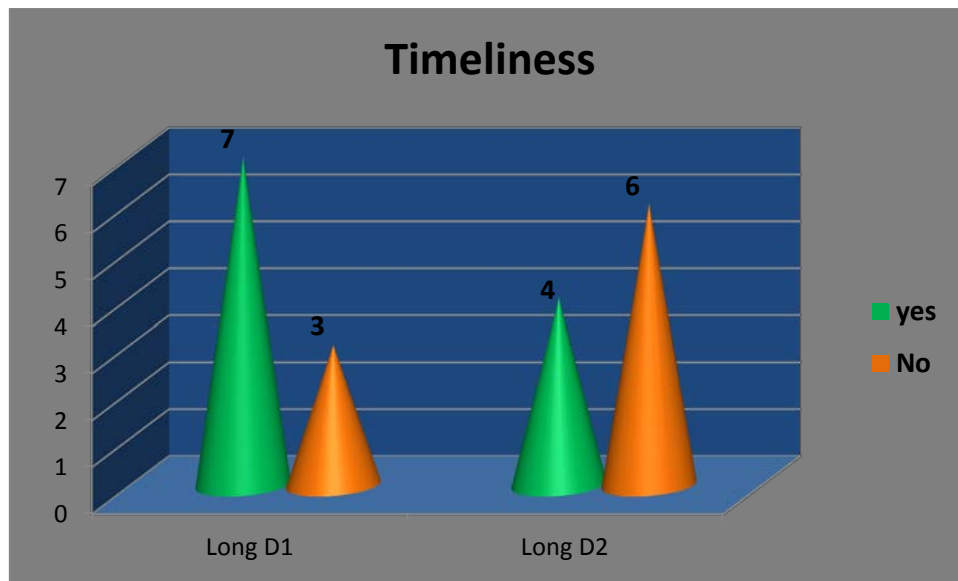
30 questionnaires were given, only 20 were returned back to us.

Question 3:

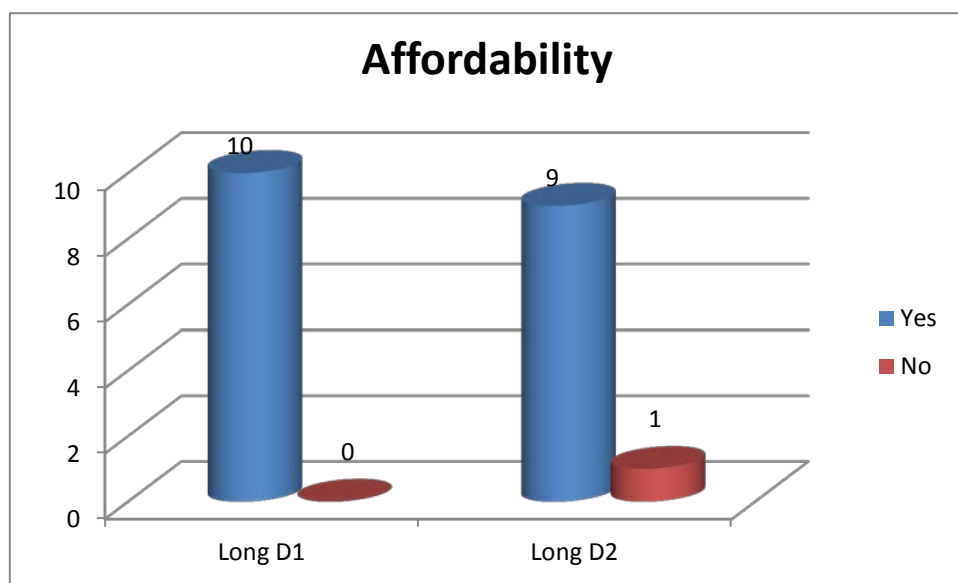
Do you easily find public transport to your disposal?



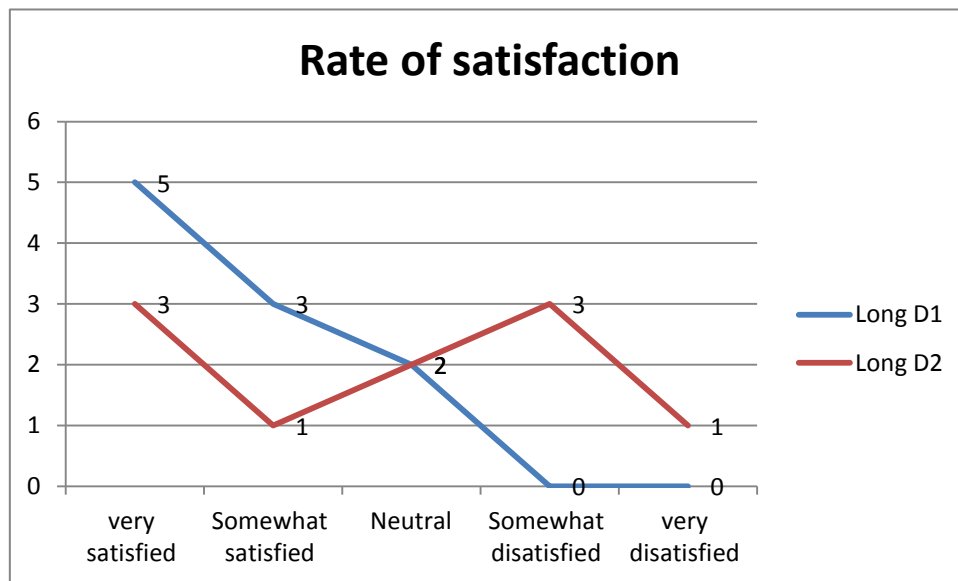
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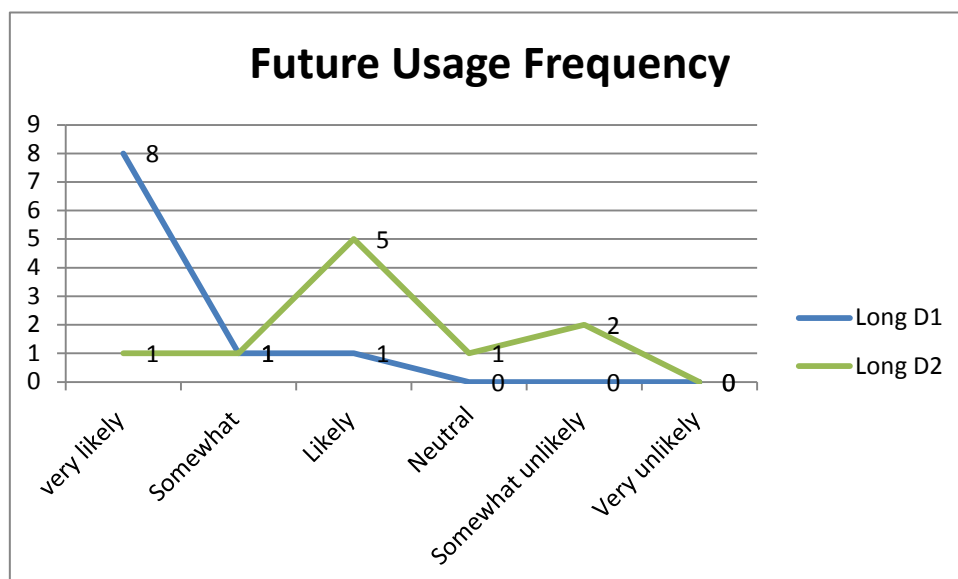
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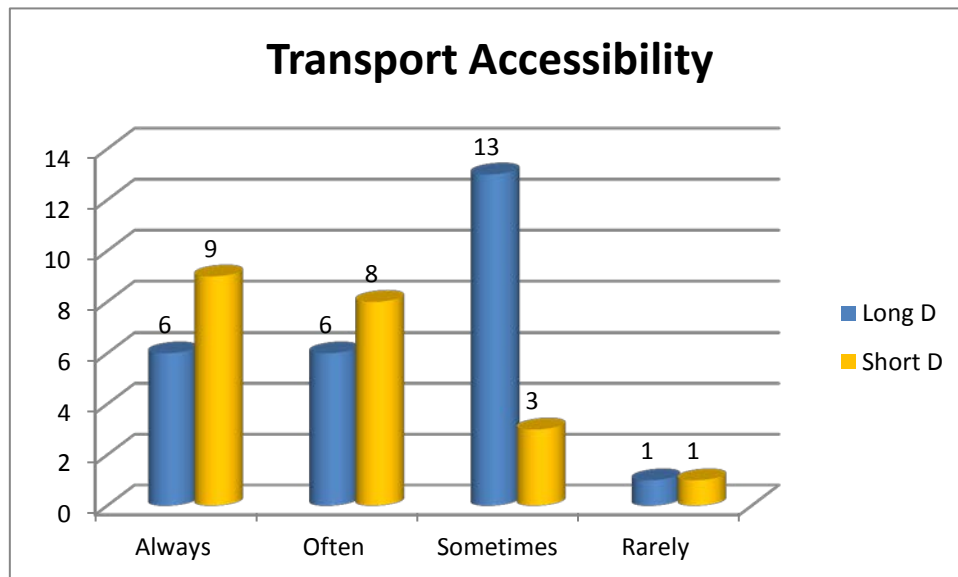
Question 7: How likely are you to continue using this form of public transport?



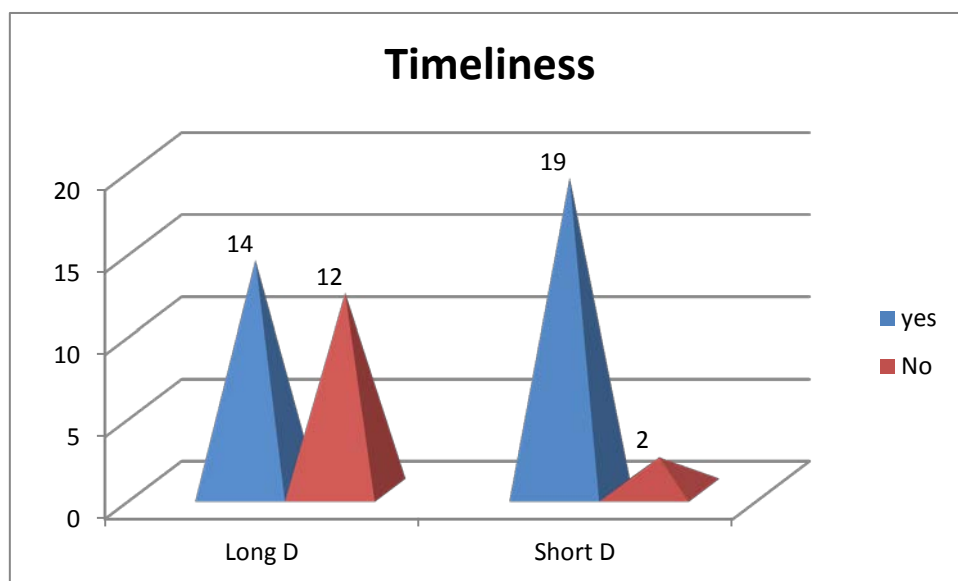
Long Distance and Short Distance Mini-Buses (in-town public transport)

30 questionnaires were issued, 24 were returned back to us for long distance mini-buses and, 21 for short distance mini-buses

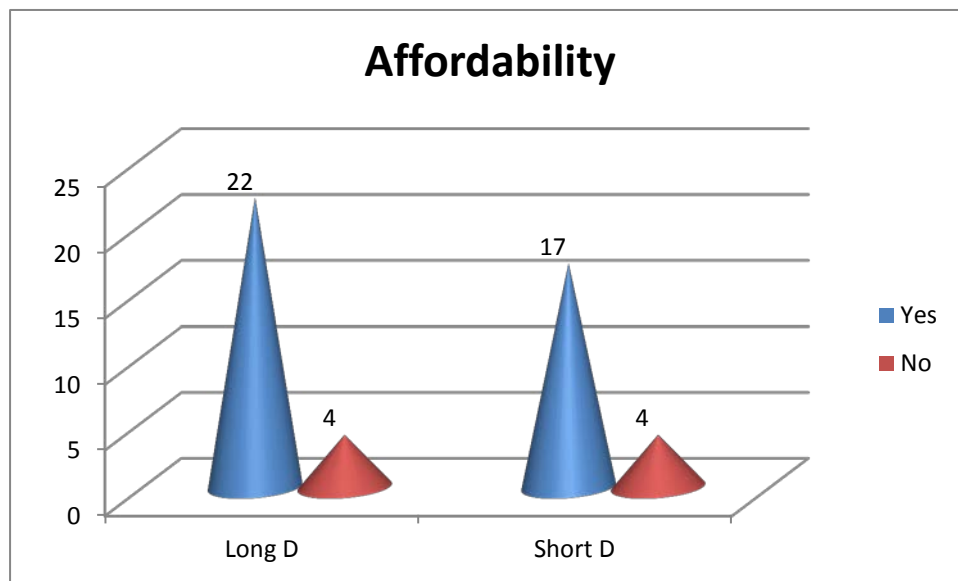
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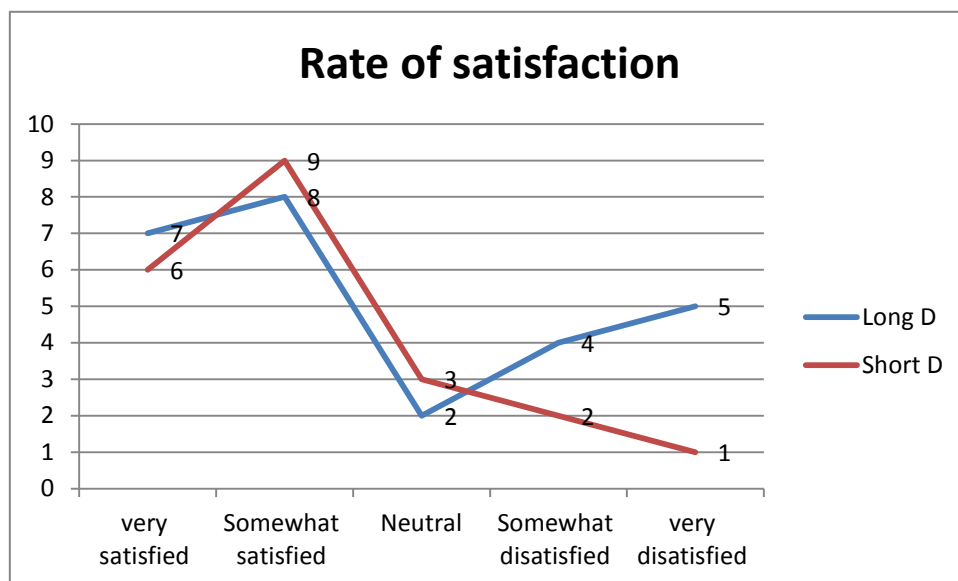
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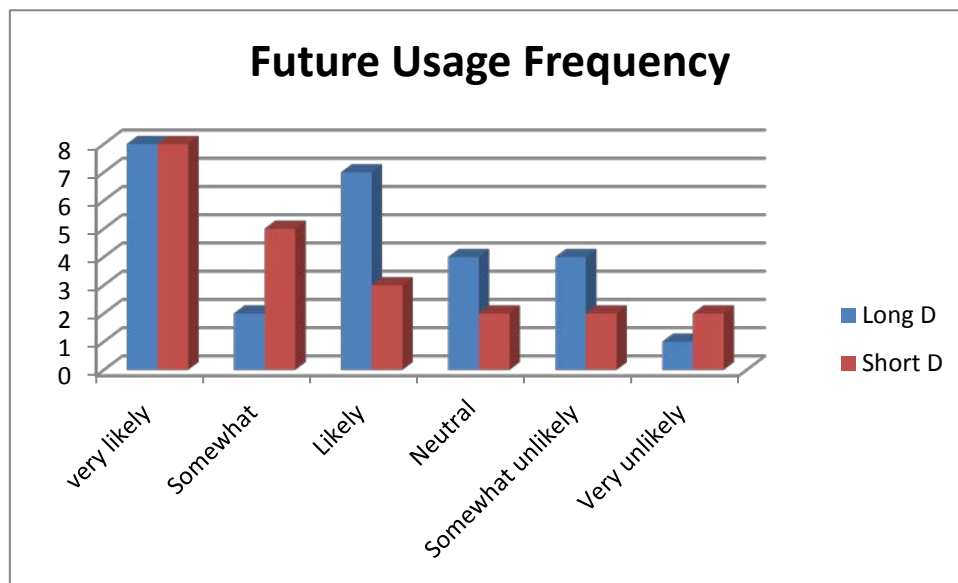
Question 5: Do you find this form of public transport affordable? If no, motivate your answer.



Question 6: How will you rate your satisfaction with that form of public transport? Kindly motivate your answer.



Question 7: How likely are you to continue using this form of public transport?



Conclusion

Public transport is therefore vital for the vast majorities who have no access to private transport, as there is a need for personal mobility, in particular for access to employment opportunity. There are those people who travel daily to and from their places of employment by making use of public transport and there are those who use public transport less frequently for instance when those have their own cars run out of petrol and they are left with no other choice. So, as the population increase more public transport is required to allow people to move from one location to another but with low income levels affordability. The service provided by the drivers of this different mode of transport is often regarded as inadequate and that there is a need to educate or train such drivers on the important of customer satisfaction.

Recommendation

Taxi

- ☞ Increase the number of taxi rank especially at Katutura
- ☞ Driver need to attend workshop to learn more on customer service and hygiene
- ☞ Put strict law to avoid negligent driving
- ☞ Taxi driver need to treat all their customer or passenger with respect and be fair to all of them i.e. foreigner
- ☞ Make adjustment at taxi rank, at least practice 1st come 1st serve
- ☞ Taxi driver need to respect traffic rules to save lives

Municipality Bus

Workers

- ∞ Pick up time must be strictly achieved
- ∞ Notify passenger before time if there is a delay that day, either through radio, TV, Or any other way they can reach customer
- ∞ Increase number of buses as well as bus stop
- ∞ Need to charge N\$5.00 even if you don't have a card

Students

- ∞ Provide buses for students only
- ∞ Enable buses to be used throughout the day to allow movement to and from school/work
- ∞ Increase the number of buses to avoid passengers to overload
- ∞ Practice to be on the arrival time
- ∞ Motivate and inspire people to make use of municipality bus
- ∞ Increase number of bus stop
- ∞ Drivers need to be taught on customer service, and then they must keep the bus clean at all time

Long Distance Buses

∞ Long Distance 1 (Long D1)

- Need to be Punctual at all time
- Keep the bus clean always

∞ Long Distance 2 (Long D2)

- Reduce cost when charging for customers belonging
- Be on time always

Short Distance Mini-Buses

- ∞ Put order in place i.e. queue , when passenger are getting into the bus for their safety
- ∞ Practice more on customer satisfaction

- ☞ Change the way of loading people, they should try to do it with respect
- ☞ Avoid overloading and reduce speeding
- ☞ Increase the number of buses and keep the bus clean at all time

Rail

- ☞ There is a need to be more punctual(be on time, and depart on time)
- ☞ Improve on neatness especially in the toilet
- ☞ Management need to monitor and control staff performance
- ☞ Make use of electrical train
- ☞ Get up to date equipment resources that will enable the train to function properly

Long Distance Mini-Buses

- ☞ Most of the buses do not have seatbelt and are not roadworthy
- ☞ Air conditioner in the bus for better customer service
- ☞ Neatness in the bus
- ☞ Organise a workshop for driver to be taught on customer service

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