

AN EVALUATION OF SERVICES THE MARA LINER BUS COMPANY PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The research has been carried out to make an evaluation the services of Mara Line Bus Company as a public transportation in Universiti Utara Malaysia. Through of the study, some negative factors influencing the development and the effectiveness of the present public transport system have been identified. To overcome these problems, some suggestion has to implement. The findings of the research among others were reviewed the problems of the products, competition and the workers of Mara Liner Bus Company and provide transport services for UUM students. The MARA Liner Bus Company should provide more buses to UUM, reduce the ticket price, fix a specific number of passengers, the conductors is not friendly and so on. This research also is going to evaluate the problems of public transport in Malaysia and the way to solve the negative effect in the future.

Keywords: Services, Public Transport, Bus Company, Competition, Passenger

1 INTRODUCTION

Public transport is the main means of transport for all residents to move from one place to another place. Therefore, public transport must comply with several features among which are having a great time, high frequency, are always available, fast, safe, easily accessible, convenient, and cheap (Ahmad Tarmizie, 2011). Nevertheless, the problems associated with public transport services is no new things. Each year the government made statement to improve the quality of public transport but still being issued. The efficiency of the management of bus service implemented to ensure the welfare¹ and safety of consumers.

Problem Statement

¹ Welfare refers to happiness, security, preferences, needs, desert, relative comparisons" (Fitzpatrick 2001, 5).

The purpose of the report is to review the problems of the products, competition and the workers of the Mara Liner Bus Company and provide transport services for UUM students. Moreover, this report also hopes to find the solutions to the problems faced by the Mara Liner Bus Company.

1.2 Objectives

1.2.1 The main objective of the research is to identify the problems of the products, competition and the workers of Mara Liner Bus Company as a major transport service for UUM students. Moreover, this report also hopes to find the solutions to the problems faced by the Mara Liner Bus Company.

The specific objectives include:

- i. To identify the problems of road-based public transport systems in Universiti Utara Malaysia
- ii. To identify the factors affecting reliability public transport systems
- iii. To identify the contribution obtained from effective public transportation management in Universiti Utara Malaysia.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Background of Mara Liner Bus Company

The Mara Liner Bus Company is registered under Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA)². One of the Malaysian government agency. Their vision is to be an efficient leader in the transportation services in rural society and their mission is to provide the best bus services transportation, efficiency, excellence services, and well-mannered to society and further contribute to the country developments. They also state of their motto is "*Mesra. Selesa. Bergaya.*"

² Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA) , an agency under The Ministry Of Entrepreneur And Cooperative Development

2.2 Service Quality

The discussion about the service quality is complex because of the quality assessment services with a different assessment of the quality of the product, especially because is not real (intangible) and the pattern of production and its consumption is running simultaneously. Besides differences in these characteristics, in assessing the service quality, the customers are directly involved and participate in the service process, so is the service quality is how consumers respond to the services consumed or enjoyed. The effort of consumer needs fulfilment, consumer desire and compensate for the accuracy of delivering customer expectation. The perceived quality is how well the service level delivered matches customer expectations. When perceived performance ratings are lower than expectations, this is a sign of poor quality, and the reverse is suggested good quality (Lim & Tang 2000).

Parasuraman et al. (1991) revealed five dimensions of service quality. The five dimensions of service quality are:

Realibility

The ability to provide services promised to the right (accurately) and the ability to be trusted (dependably), mainly to provide services in a timely manner (on time), in the same manner in accordance with the schedule that has been promised, and without making a mistake each time.

Responsiveness

That is the will or desire to help employees and provides services that consumers needed. Leaving the consumer to wait, especially without a clear base, will cause a negative impression that should not happen. Unless this error was responded quickly, it can be a good expression and a pleasant experience

Assurance

There is include knowledge, skills, hospitality, courteous, and trustworthy nature of the contact personnel to the nature of consumer skepticism³, and feel free from danger and risk.

Empathy

There is include attitude contact and company personnel to understand consumer needs and difficulties, good communication, personal attention, ease of communication or conduct in the relationship.

Tangibles

There is availability of physical facilities, equipment, and communication facilities and the other that can or should be in the process of services.

³ Skepticism is about knowledge argues that we know very little or nothing of what we think we know, or at any rate that this position is no less reasonable than the belief in knowledge.

2.3 Problems of road-based public transport systems

Wright (2004) identifies the following deficiencies in the current services that the public transport customers typically complain about;

1. Inconvenience in terms of location of stations and frequency of services;
2. Failure to service key origins and destinations
3. Lack of safety in terms of driver ability and road worthiness of public transport vehicles
4. Service is much slower than private vehicles, especially when public transport vehicles make frequent stops;
5. Overloading⁴ of vehicles makes ride uncomfortable;
6. Low status of public transit services (Wright, 2004).

2.4 Theoretical Framework

Sekaran (2004) defines theoretical framework as a conceptual model of how one theorizes or make logical sense of the relationship among several factors that have been identified as important to the problem. Theoretical framework discusses the relationship and connections among variables that are deemed to be integral to the dynamics of the situations that is being investigated.

Sekaran (2001) defines an independent variable is one that influences the dependant variable in either a positive or a negative way. The independent variables in this study are products, competitions or competitors and workers.

The dependant variable is the variable of primary interest to the researcher. There searcher's goal is to understand and describe the dependent variable, or to explain its variability or predict it (Sekaran, 2001). The dependent variables in this study is the effect of customer service in the MARA Liner Bus Company service.

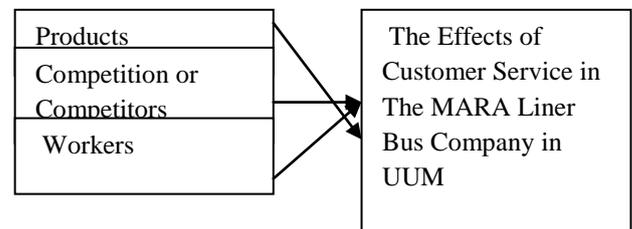


Figure 1.1: Theoretical Framework of the Study

The products, competition and the workers in the MARA Liner Bus Company that influence the development and management of public bus service from Universiti Utara Malaysia.

⁴ Overloading is demand on an equipment or system that exceeds its capacity.

3 METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this research is primary⁵ and secondary⁶ data. The primary sources of information used in this report were an observation and an interview with the supervisor and the workers of the MARA Liner Bus Company. Apart from this, research obtained the secondary sources of information from the previous research about public bus. In addition, brochures and pamphlets and searching the internet website. This analysis had done by pick the highest and lowest number of passengers who were observed for a month and does the comparison on it.

4 FINDINGS

Figure 1. The type of problems faced by UUM students with Mara Liner Bus Company of the month from September 2012 - October 2012.

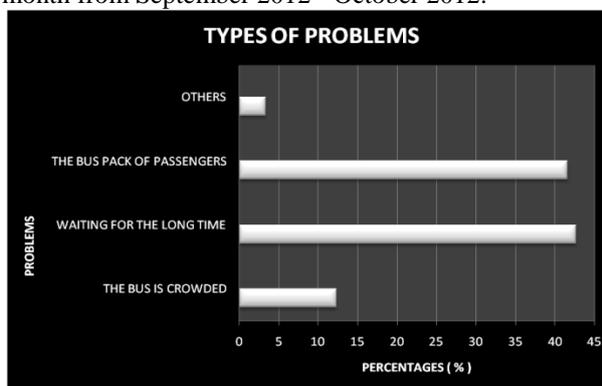


Figure 1 shows that the type of problems faced by UUM students with Mara Liner Bus Company of the month from September 2012 to October 2012. From the survey, the majority of the students spent a long time of waiting for the MARA Liner Bus Company. Beside that, about 43% respondents complained the bus being packed with passengers. At times, the passengers had stood on the step. This condition has caused the passengers to feel discomfort and unsafe. Meanwhile, the rest is faced with bus is crowded and other problems.

Figure 2. The frequency of travelling by UUM students with Mara Liner Bus Company of the month from September 2012 - October 2012.

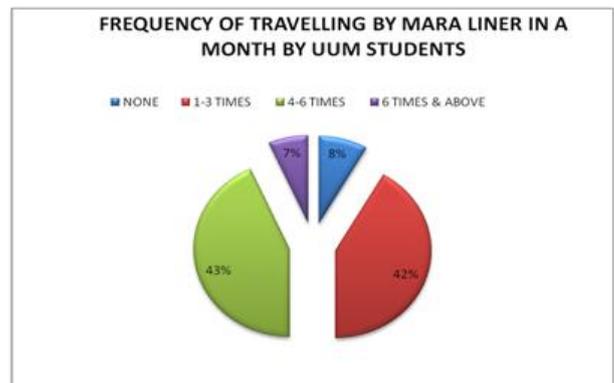


Figure 2 shows that the frequency of travelling by UUM students with Mara Liner Bus Company of the month from September 2012 to October 2012. The result showed the majority of the respondents took MARA Liner Bus Company 1 to 3 times and 4 to 6 times in a month. However, only a small percentage of respondents preferred HBR Bus Company⁷ and used other alternative transports such as taxi in a month when travelling out from UUM.

Figure 3. The respondents' satisfaction for the service of workers of MARA Liner Bus Company from September 2012 - October 2012

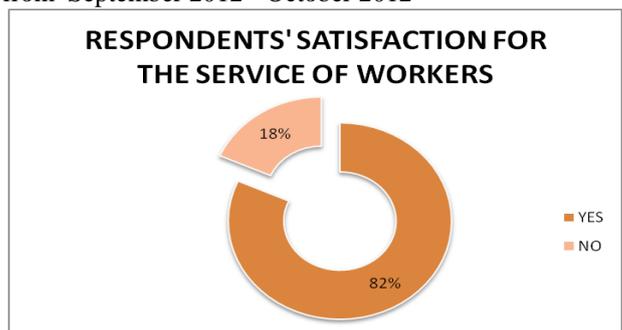


Figure 3 shows that the respondents' satisfaction for the service of the workers of the MARA Liner Bus Company from September 2012 to October 2012. The majority of respondents were satisfied with the service provided by the workers of the MARA Liner Bus Company. Beside that, less than 20% of respondents were dissatisfied with the service provided by the workers of the MARA Liner Bus Company. These services that provided by the workers such as helping passengers with their luggage to the bus.

5.0 DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Problem of MARA Liner Bus Company

5.1.1 Products

From the findings, most UUM students agreed that the MARA Liner Bus Company provides the best

⁵ Primary data is original data collected for a specific research goal.

⁶ Secondary data is data originally collected for a different purpose and reused for another research question.

⁷ HBR Bus Company is one of the popular bus service in Kubang Pasu district and the main competitor to MARA Liner

facilities and service to their passenger. The condition of the bus is good compared with other buses within UUM campus. Although the condition of the bus is good, but some students still commented that the ticket price is expensive, feel unsafe and other problems such as waiting for a long time and overcrowding.

5.1.2 Competitors

Rapid growth of the population, as a result of the number of vehicles is increasing annually. Furthermore, more than half respondents from the survey responded that the MARA Liner Bus Company is better than other bus companies. Nevertheless, the MARA Liner Bus Company is not punctual. They need to wait quite a long time for the bus. So normally they will take other buses that more punctual than the MARA Liner Bus Company, such as a HBR Bus Company and the ticket price is also cheaper than the MARA Liner Bus Company.

5.1.2 Workers

Finally, most respondents also responded that the workers of the MARA Liner Bus Company provide the best service to their passengers. However, from the findings based on ratings for the workers, most respondents rated average for the workers of the MARA Liner Bus Company, this is good. From the survey, some respondents responded that the workers were unfriendly, the drivers were reckless when driving and so on. Besides that, we realized that some students also encountered sexual harassment.

There are several recommendations for the MARA Liner Bus Company to reduce the complaints and dissatisfaction among the UUM students.

5.2 Solution for MARA Liner Bus Company

5.2.1 Products

- 1) Increase the number of buses and trip to UUM

The research recommends that the MARA Liner Bus Company should provide more buses and increase the number of trips to UUM, especially during the peak season or holiday. Furthermore, students who stay at Bukit Kachi said no buses are providing there and hoped that the MARA Liner Bus Company can provide more buses to Bukit Kachi. This would help UUM students living outside the campus when travelling out.

- 2) Reduce the ticket price and provide students' package for UUM students

However, more than half of the students from the survey responded they were satisfied with the ticket price. Nevertheless, some students responded they were not satisfied with the ticket prices. Thus, students suggested that the MARA Liner Bus Company provide students' package to

UUM students and reduce the ticket price. A suggestion was made for the price was to charge between RM 1 to RM 1.50 for one way trip to Changlun, the current price to Changlun is RM 2. For Jitra, the current ticket price for one way trip is RM 3.80, while the students suggested from RM 1.50 to RM 3.50. Meanwhile the current ticket price to Alor Setar is RM 5.40, but the students suggest between RM 3 to RM 5 is suitable. We also recommended that the MARA Liner Bus Company should reduce the ticket price and eliminate the service charges to passengers. This is because other buses such as a HBR Bus Company are not taking the service charges from their passengers.

- 3) Fix a specific number of passengers

Sometime the bus is full until the passengers need to stand on the ladder. The MARA Liner Bus Company should not ignore this problem. The research recommends MARA Liner Bus Company fix a specific number of passengers. The purpose is to protect the safety of the passengers and can build a good reputation among the passengers, because the MARA Liner Bus Company is always care of their safety but not of the profit.

5.2.2 Competitors

- 1) Punctual by following the bus schedule

Most students expect the MARA Liner Bus Company to always come late and they needed to wait for a long time to take the bus. They often would take the bus which arrived first, such as HBR. If the MARA Liner Bus Company still ignores this problem, it may affect the reputation of the MARA Liner Bus Company. To solve this problem, we suggest MARA Liner Bus Company put up a bus schedule at every DPP to inform passengers of the time schedule of the buses and coming punctual by following the time schedule after put up the schedule.

5.2.2 Workers

- 1) Provide more training to the workers

From the survey, the rating for the workers are average, that is not a good result. Have students said that the drivers are drive to fast, the conductors is not friendly and so on. We suggest MARA Liner Bus Company should provide more training to their workers. The training program is such as how to communicate with the passengers, driving skill for the drivers, politeness and friendliness and others that can improve the skill and attitude of the workers.

- 2) Reward the workers

From the observation, research realizes that the salary of the workers is not higher and sometime that are feel bore with their job. It may be one of the reasons for the workers no perform well, because no motivation. Form the situation, research recommends that the MARA Liner Bus

Company provide some reward to the workers to motivate them. For example, who are full attendant and perform well during duty can get the reward or gift from the company.

6 CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

The main reason for this research summarizes in three terms which is finding, conclusion and recommendation. Base of the finding, majority of respondents responded that the MARA Liner Bus Company provides the best facilities to the passengers if compare with other bus companies. However, the problems of the MARA Liner Bus Company are the ticket price, not punctual, overcrowding and the attitude of the workers. So, research recommended the MARA Liner Bus Company to improve their service by increase the number of buses and trip, reduce the ticket price, be punctual and provide training and rewards the workers.

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