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Is traffic police SERVQUAL assessment different among drivers in terms of experience? Case study of the Philippines and South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Designing tailored services is critical to enhancing client satisfaction for private and public services such as road traffic. Among the factors associated with car accidents are traffic violations of established rules and regulations. Indeed, driving skills and practice have become crucial in a complex and dynamic road environment. The study's objective was to advise traffic department managers on how to customize their service for drivers regarding their experience. A questionnaire assessing their expectations and perceived performance with regard to six traffic service quality dimensions, namely tangibility, reliability, promptitude, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, was self-administered to 886 motorists chosen using a simple random sampling technique in the Philippines and South Africa. Data collected were analyzed using ANOVA and Post Hoc Tukey HSD. Results indicate that less experienced drivers had a better appreciation of traffic service quality provided by traffic departments and officers. Therefore, more focus should be placed on experienced drivers to raise their level of satisfaction.

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Introduction

Despite the current slowing of the economic growth experienced worldwide, primarily due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict (Gourinchas, 2022), developing countries such as the Philippines and South Africa have seen an increase in their population and registered cars on the road that require providing adequate infrastructures for sustainable road transportation and drivers' satisfaction (Feikie et al., 2018). Besides equipping roads, drivers' behavior and lifestyle require attention to reduce the risk of accidents (Al-Hemoud et al., 2010) while lack of driving experience also needs to be considered (Hu et al., 2020).

Indeed, risk perception and causal explanations of road accidents are highly associated with experience and knowledge about traffic and automobile driving (Kouabenan, 2011). Thus, as expectation and perceived performance of traffic service determine the level of satisfaction, investigating the difference in them regarding driving experience is an important input in tailoring traffic department service and traffic police officers' behavior during the driver-police encounter for an ideal quality service.

Quality service is crucial for any organization as it creates a unique space for the service in the customer's mind, contributing to its positioning strategy (Ganapathy et al., 2023). Although most public organizations do not operate in a competitive environment, as by law, only the government can supply this kind of service to citizens; it is nonetheless important for them to seek the satisfaction

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of their customers (Curristine et al., 2007). Thus, the traffic police department, in fulfilling its mission, looks undeniably for a high level of satisfaction by keeping its perceived performance above drivers' expectations.

In closing the gap between drivers' expectations and perceived performance of service provided by the traffic police, "ideal" service occurs when perceived performance is higher than expectation (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2016) while an equal balance between the two is deemed "satisfactory" (Kurtz & Clow, 2007). However, a balance of power leaning towards expectation results in "dissatisfaction" (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2016). Hence, maintaining the current perceived performance of traffic quality service above drivers' expectations is the ultimate goal to achieve for the traffic department, primarily since current drivers' high knowledge regarding their duties and rights fuels a high demand level for quality traffic police services (Vanderschuren et al., 2019). Indeed, road users interact unwillingly and adopt a negative attitude towards traffic police officers should "dissatisfaction" not amount to radicality (Mason et al., 2019).

Following the above, fulfilling the traffic police quality service's mission requires, in addition to understanding the two core concepts of quality service, which are expectation and perceived performance, understanding relationships between them and the level of satisfaction as well as influencing factors such as driving experience (Hu et al., 2020).

In the context of traffic police service, satisfaction refers to drivers' gratification and fulfilment when comparing their perceived performance of the service they receive from the traffic police department compared to their initial expectations (Shah & Regassa, 2010). As for perceived performance is about assessing both the traffic department as an organization and police officers based on drivers' experience of the service received (Wägar et al., 2012). Thus, traffic department managers must be aware that drivers' satisfaction relies heavily on the way they are treated by traffic police officers rather than the consistency in addressing road-related issues (Murphy & Barkworth, 2014). Therefore, drivers should be treated with dignity and respect. At the same time, driving experience refers to highly complex tasks and special skills that need to be developed for driving in dynamic and dense traffic when maneuvering a vehicle (Wege et al., 2010).

The present study in hypothesizing that driving experience play a key role that influences drivers' level of satisfaction proposes to look at the difference in the expectations, perceived performance, and level of satisfaction with the service quality provided by traffic departments and police officers in relation to the driving experience for consideration in designing strategies to better traffic service quality. The analysis considers both expectation and perceived performance as latent variables explained by six sub-dimensions, namely tangibility, reliability, promptitude, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, which apply to the specific context of driver-police encounters (Sarrico et al., 2013). The sub-dimensions have the following meanings:

- i. Tangibility - The appearance of facilities, equipment, and service personnel;
- ii. Reliability - The capability to deliver the service in line with what is promised, in a precise, trusted, and safe way;
- iii. Promptitude - serving the citizen promptly, speedy delivery, and clearly informing the citizen about procedures;
- iv. Responsiveness - Willingness to help the client;
- v. Assurance - The knowledge and courtesy of the service provider and their capacity to transmit safety, security, and trustworthiness;
- vi. Empathy - The ease of contact, attention, and understanding provided to the client.

Driving under normal circumstances is less demanding than in a complex, dense, and dynamic environment for novice drivers. Hence more practice is needed to make driving a routine task (Mobility & Transport - Road Safety, n.d.). A recent study by Du et al. (2022) demonstrates the impact of driving experience on related performance and drivers' visual behavior. Although it has been investigated for high-speed train drivers, it is believed to apply to the road environmental context as lack of experience is highly associated with road accidents and traffic violations (Alfonsi et al., 2018). Furthermore, as observed in a study conducted in China, in nowadays top industries such as the online food delivery where deliverymen deal with workload stressors leading to traffic violations that impact negatively public safety (Lu et al., 2022), driving experience could be key in avoiding fatal crashes causing deaths or serious injuries. Dealing with high volume of bad traffic behaviors as displayed above make traffic police officers' work more stressful, physically demanding, and mentally challenging as highlighted in a study that took place in Nepal by Yadav et al. (2023). Consequently, one can imagine that all the ingredients of an encounter which increases the gap between service provided and its perceived performance are united. So, if experience can help reduce spats on the road, these encounters will also be reduced as well as the resulting tensions.

The research question this study attempted to answer is:

- i. Do drivers' expectations, perceived performance, and level of satisfaction with traffic quality service differ regarding driving experience in the Philippines and South Africa?

Research and Methodology

Sample and data collection

This study's unit of analysis consisted of drivers from the Philippines and South Africa. Convenient sampling was used to approach respondents following the suggestion from Park et al. (2022). Data were collected through surveys with 886 respondents, of which 465 were from the Philippines, and 421 were from South Africa. Only people aged 18 and older were eligible to complete the

questionnaire. Data were collected at various times of the day and on different days of the week using a simple random sampling technique. Questionnaires were self-administered and handed over to people that answered “Yes” to the following screening question: 1) Have you used a traffic department in the last five years?

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

	Overall		Philippines		South Africa	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Country						
Philippines	465	52.5	465	100.0	-	-
South Africa	421	47.5	-	-	421	100.0
Total	886	100.0	465	100.0	421	100.0
Gender						
Male	466	52.6	256	55.1	210	49.9
Female	420	47.4	209	44.9	211	50.1
Total	886	100.0	465	100.0	421	100.0
Age						
18-29 years	493	55.6	292	62.8	201	47.7
30-44 years	258	29.1	109	23.4	149	35.4
45-59	121	13.7	59	12.7	62	14.7
60 years or older	14	1.6	5	1.1	9	2.1
Total	886	100.0	465	100.0	421	100.0
Education						
Primary school completed	8	0.9	3	0.6	5	1.2
Secondary school completed	204	23.0	108	23.2	96	22.8
Tertiary education completed	487	55.0	267	57.4	220	52.3
Post-graduate studies completed	151	17.0	64	13.8	87	20.7
Prefer not to answer	36	4.1	23	4.9	13	3.1
Total	886	100.0	465	100.0	421	100.0
How many years have you been in possession of a driver's license?						
<10 years	579	65.3	364	78.3	215	51.1
10-20 years	180	20.3	63	13.5	117	27.8
>20 years	127	14.3	38	8.2	89	21.1
Total	886	100.0	465	100.0	421	100.0

Source: Authors

Questionnaire

This study aimed to examine differences in drivers' expectations and perceived performance regarding traffic police service quality and the level of satisfaction regarding their driving experience. Six latent variables were considered for both expectations and perceived performance, namely, tangibility (7 items), reliability (8 items), promptitude (6 items), responsiveness (8 items), assurance (5 items), and empathy (6 items). Each dimension was assessed on a five points Likert scale ranging from “not important at all” to “very important” for expectations, and “not good at all” to “excellent” for the perceived performance.

Findings

As demonstrated in Table 2 below, “no” statistically significant mean difference was found between driving experience groups regarding all six expectation's dimensions as well as level of satisfaction for the overall data set while all six perceived performance dimensions have significant differences between groups (PPTANG: Mean = 3.6350, $F_{(2,863)} = 3.836$, $p = 0.022$; PPREL: Mean = 3.5278, $F_{(2,863)} = 5.864$, $p = 0.003$; PPPROMP: Mean = 3.5278, $F_{(2,863)} = 5.137$, $p = 0.006$; PPRESP: Mean = 3.5656, $F_{(2,863)} = 5.429$, $p = 0.005$; PPASS: Mean = 3.7217, $F_{(2,863)} = 4.576$, $p = 0.011$; PPEMPAT: Mean = 3.6503, $F_{(2,863)} = 4.482$, $p = 0.012$).

Likewise, results from the Philippines' subset showed “no” statistically significant mean difference between driving experience groups regarding all six expectation's dimensions as well as the level of satisfaction, while all six perceived performance dimensions have significant differences between groups (PPTANG: Mean = 3.7527, $F_{(2,462)} = 3.693$, $p = 0.026$; PPREL: Mean = 3.7962, $F_{(2,462)} = 4.699$, $p = 0.010$; PPPROMP: Mean = 3.7380, $F_{(2,462)} = 3.073$, $p = 0.047$; PPRESP: Mean = 3.7589, $F_{(2,462)} = 3.463$, $p = 0.032$; PPASS: Mean = 3.8344, $F_{(2,462)} = 4.081$, $p = 0.018$; PPEMPAT: Mean = 3.8280, $F_{(2,462)} = 4.593$, $p = 0.011$). On the contrary, results indicated “no” statistically significant mean difference between driving experience groups regarding all variables considered.

Table 2: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

	Overall				Philippines				South Africa			
	Mean	df	F	Sig.	Mean	df	F	Sig.	Mean	df	F	Sig.
EXPTANG	4.1651	2/883	1.787	0.168	4.2230	2/462	0.078	0.925	4.1011	2/418	1.840	0.160
EXPREL	4.3560	2/883	0.221	0.802	4.4323	2/462	0.293	0.746	4.2717	2/418	1.678	0.188
EXPPROMP	4.3294	2/883	0.392	0.676	4.4025	2/462	0.150	0.861	4.2486	2/418	1.586	0.206
EXPRESP	4.3131	2/883	0.183	0.832	4.3745	2/462	0.076	0.927	4.2452	2/418	2.013	0.135
EXPASS	4.3569	2/883	0.142	0.867	4.4249	2/462	0.030	0.970	4.2817	2/418	0.469	0.626
EXPEMPAT	4.2970	2/883	0.256	0.774	4.3778	2/462	0.035	0.966	4.2078	2/418	2.061	0.129
PPTANG	3.6350	2/883	3.836	0.022*	3.7527	2/462	3.693	0.026*	3.5049	2/418	0.120	0.887
PPREL	3.6556	2/883	5.864	0.003**	3.7962	2/462	4.699	0.010*	3.5003	2/418	0.357	0.700
PPPROMP	3.5278	2/883	5.137	0.006**	3.7380	2/462	3.073	0.047*	3.2957	2/418	0.557	0.574
PPRESP	3.5656	2/883	5.429	0.005**	3.7589	2/462	3.463	0.032*	3.3521	2/418	0.052	0.950
PPASS	3.7217	2/883	4.576	0.011*	3.8344	2/462	4.081	0.018*	3.5971	2/418	0.334	0.716
PPEMPAT	3.6503	2/883	4.482	0.012*	3.8280	2/462	4.593	0.011*	3.4541	2/418	0.633	0.531
LOSAT	3.4300	2/883	1.300	0.273	3.4194	2/462	2.164	0.116	3.4418	2/418	1.147	0.319

**The mean difference between groups is significant at $p \leq 0.01$; * The mean difference between groups is significant at $p \leq 0.05$

Source: Authors

Further investigation using Post Hoc Tuckey HSD - Multiple Comparisons in **Table 3** demonstrated that drivers with less than 10 years of experience had a better judgment regarding the traffic department's appearance of facilities, equipment, and service personnel than those with 10-20 years of driving experience. They were also more confident in police officers' capability to deliver the service in line with what is promised, in a precise, trusted, and safe way than those with more than 20 years of driving experience.

Likewise, drivers with less than 10 years of experience believed more than drivers with 10-20 years of driving experience that traffic departments serve the citizens promptly and inform them clearly about procedures. Similarly, drivers with less than 10 years of experience saw more than experienced drivers police officers' willingness to help their clients. They appreciated more than drivers with 20 years of experience in police officers' knowledge, courtesy of the service provider, and their capacity to transmit safety, security, and trustworthiness. Finally, they believed more in the police officers' ease of contact, attention, and understanding provided to their clients than those with 10-20 years of driving experience.

Consequently, it is asserted that more experienced drivers need better-tailored service during their visits to the traffic department and driver-police encounters as their assessment of the quality of service provided by both the traffic department and police officers diminishes with the acquisition of experience.

Table 3: Post Hoc Tuckey HSD - Multiple Comparisons

	Driving experience groups		Overall		Philippines	
	I	J	Mean difference (I-J)	Sig.	Mean difference (I-J)	Sig.
PPTANG	<10 years	10-20 years	1.15973*	0.044	2.07662*	0.049
		>20 years	1.29048	0.057	1.97470	0.193
	10-20 years	>20 years	0.13075	0.982	-0.10192	0.997
PPREL	<10 years	10-20 years	1.45282	0.064	2.50946	0.060
		>20 years	2.22058*	0.008	3.18031*	0.046
	10-20 years	>20 years	0.76776	0.656	0.67084	0.914
PPPROPMP	<10 years	10-20 years	1.57545*	0.009	1.77106*	0.011
		>20 years	1.12011	0.161	1.84500	0.215
	10-20 years	>20 years	-0.45534	0.804	0.07393	0.998
PPRESP	<10 years	10-20 years	1.68592*	0.039	2.21581*	0.048
		>20 years	2.10627*	0.021	2.95474*	0.036
	10-20 years	>20 years	0.42034	0.895	0.73893	0.907
PPASS	<10 years	10-20 years	0.68610	0.212	1.21215	0.198
		>20 years	1.31405*	0.014	2.17163*	0.037
	10-20 years	>20 years	0.62795	0.493	0.95948	0.637
PPEMPAT	<10 years	10-20 years	1.28161*	0.029	2.01862*	0.049
		>20 years	1.18200	0.100	2.32606	0.077
	10-20 years	>20 years	-0.09961	0.988	0.30744	0.969

* The mean difference between groups is significant at $p \leq 0.05$

Source: Authors

Conclusions

Traffic departments regulate road-related activities to prevent accidents and ensure that drivers do not contravene or violate established safety and security rules. Because another operator cannot provide the service it renders as per the law, it remains important for the traffic departments to pursue the satisfaction of road users through a perceived performance of the traffic service quality that meets or exceeds drivers' expectations.

The present study investigated the differences between drivers' expectations and perceived performance of traffic service quality rendered in the Philippines and South Africa to advise traffic department managers in their design of customized service with regards to driving experience to enhance drivers' level of satisfaction. All six characters that explain traffic service quality, namely tangibility, reliability, promptitude, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, were assessed through a questionnaire self-administered by respondents chosen using a simple random sampling technique. The gathered data were analyzed statistically through ANOVA and Post Hoc Tuckey HSD - Multiple Comparisons in addition to descriptive statistics.

Results summarized in *Table 2* show that "no" statistically significant mean difference was found between driving experience groups regarding all six expectation dimensions and level of satisfaction for the overall data set. In contrast, all six perceived performance dimensions have significant differences between groups. The same was true for the data set from the Philippines. Whereas "no" statistically significant mean difference was found between driving experience groups from the South Africa data set for all six dimensions for both expectations and perceived performance as well as the level of satisfaction. Furthermore, results in *Table 3* highlighted that the less experienced group had a better appreciation of traffic service quality provided by the traffic department and police officers. Hence, more focus should be placed on experienced drivers to raise their level of satisfaction.

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