



## ASSESSING COMMUNICATION APPROACHES OF NIGERIA RAILWAY CORPORATION (NRC) IN ENHANCING PASSENGER EXPERIENCE AND SATISFACTION

Nkiru Comfort Ezeh<sup>1</sup>, Nonye Florence Obiegbu<sup>2</sup>, Agatha Chinedu Aduka<sup>3</sup>

### Abstract

The study investigated the communication strategies of the Nigeria Railway Corporation (NRC) in enhancing passenger experience and satisfaction, with a focus on the Lagos-Ibadan railway route. The route is significant for its high passenger volume and modern infrastructure, contributing to the NRC's strategic importance in Nigeria's transportation sector. The study leveraged the Media Richness Theory to assess the effectiveness of NRC's communication strategies in engaging and updating its passenger and how it affects passenger's satisfaction. Three train stations on the Lagos-Ibadan railway route were purposively selected. Using a mixed- method approach, the study combine survey (quantitative) of 376 passengers and In-depth Interview (qualitative) with 20 communication staff members of NRC. Data generated from the survey were analysed using descriptive method while data from IDI were analysed thematically. The study found that while NRC utilized various communication channels, such as station announcement, helpdesk services and digital media, challenges persist in accessibility, clarity, responsiveness, and timeliness of information delivery. Again, the passengers expressed low satisfaction with the NRC's handling of communication during service disruptions and emergencies. The study therefore recommended that the NRC leverage digital platforms for real-time updates; enhance the clarity of announcements; and improve staff training to foster better passenger's engagement.

**Keywords:** *Nigeria Railway Corporation; Passenger Satisfaction; Communication Strategy; Assessment. Lagos-Ibadan Route*

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<sup>1,2,3</sup> Department of Mass Communication, Novena University Ogume, Delta State,  
[ezehnkiru\\_ct@yahoo.com](mailto:ezehnkiru_ct@yahoo.com)

## **Introduction**

Railway serves as a critical component of transportation system. The United State Institute of Peace (2018) notes that railways present inherent benefits compared to road networks by citing their economic scale, reduced maintenance requirements, high speed and efficiency over long distances. Railway transportation stands as an economical choice for freight movements because its features promote trade advancement (Nguyen & Mogaji, 2022). The development of strategic railway systems provides opportunities for socio-economic advancement particularly in developing regions (Ogunbiyi & Abaluba 2024; Bassey, Ngene, Akinnwumi et al, 2022).

The Nigeria Railway Corporation (NRC) is a government-owned establishment with an exclusive right to manage railway operations in Nigeria. It plays a crucial role in Nigeria's economic and societal advancement through job creation, regional connectivity and trade facilitation (Nguyen & Mogaji, 2022). The corporation achieved its best performance during the postcolonial era making revenue of about US\$2.4 million after which the rail transport's fortunes declined quickly and have never fully recovered (The Conversation Africa, 2023). NRC's service delivery suffered infrastructural challenges and poor maintenance resulting in train delays and cancellations; poor communication and customer services. This poor quality services delivery could lead to passenger's dissatisfaction and lack of trust and loyalty towards NRC services.

Passenger satisfaction represents a subjective concept which assesses the difference between expected service quality and perceived service quality (Romero, Zamorano & Monzon 2023). Public transit passengers who perceive high service quality are likely to have higher level of satisfaction and perceived value which leads them to continue using the service (Amponsah, & Adams, 2015). Understanding of rail transport passenger behaviour remains crucial because customer trust and loyalty represents a fundamental factor determining long-term financial performance (Chen & Lai, 2011).

Communication has evolved into an essential organizational component and thus must be considered during the planning and execution of decisions and activities across different sectors. Organizations' ability to effectively transmit information help create trust between clients and employees towards the company (Musheke & Phiri, 2021). Communication ensures growing

demands for accountability, transparency and performance (Fredriksson & Pallas 2018). Public sector organizations have moved communication departments to specialized and elevated positions where they serve as key centers to distribute responsibilities throughout other organizational functions.

As NRC continues to revitalize and expand, communication serves as a key instrument for organizing and packaging its existing service portfolio. The major goal is to show existing customers and potential clients that there have been positive changes in the organization's service delivery. Improving communication methods for train schedules, ticket purchases and operational delays with passengers stands as one of the organization's key priority areas. The communication strategy of public sector entities such as NRC must show its purposefulness through planning and rational thinking which leads to predictable precise results. Maintaining effective communication with passengers is necessary to deliver smooth and reliable services that satisfy their needs. Effective communication with the passenger can deal with trip uncertainty and improve trip experience (Hu et al, 2019).

This study therefore evaluates the communication approaches of Nigeria Railway Corporation (NRC) in enhancing passenger experience and satisfaction. The outcome of this research will produce valuable knowledge about how communication strategies help Nigeria Railway Corporation boost operational efficiency and service delivery.

### **Statement of Problem**

Effective communication is fundamental component of delivering high quality services in public transport system. In the case of the Nigeria Railway of the Nigeria Railway Corporation, the ability to provide timely, accurate and clear information to passengers is essential for enhancing passenger satisfaction and overall experience.

However, there have been recurring complaints from passengers regarding communicating challenges, such as inadequate information about train schedules, delays, cancellations, safety protocols and the general lack of real-time updates. This issue has led to passenger's frustration, decrease trust in NRC services, and negative public perceptions, which ultimately affect the corporation's ability to retain and attract customers.

There is need to evaluate the effectiveness of NRC current communication approaches as it continues to modernize its rail service to meet passenger expectations and create positive service experiences. NRC will struggle to deliver dependable customer-friendly transportation services unless it evaluates and upgrades its communication methods to address existing gaps. The study therefore examines the effectiveness the NRC communication methods and passengers' perception of the communication quality and how it affects it affects their satisfaction and overall experience.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the communication strategies employ by the Nigeria Railway Corporation in interacting with its passengers?
2. What is passengers' perception of the communication quality of Nigeria Railway Corporation?
3. How effective is Nigeria Railway Corporation's communication strategies in engaging and updating its passenger?
4. What is the relationship between Nigeria Railway Corporation's communication strategies and passengers' satisfaction?

### **Significance of the Study**

The results of this study will equip the NRC with practical insights to create effective communication strategies that enhance service efficiency and customer satisfaction or to refine their existing strategies for better efficiency which will lead to improved public perception of the railway system.

Other Nigerian transport systems can use this study to gain understanding about setting customer communication standards that lead to satisfaction. This research connects communication studies with transportation management to offer a multidisciplinary approach on how effective communication enhances transportation systems and passenger satisfaction. The research results will advance NRC interests while adding new perspectives to public service efficiency debates and policy formation through the practical use of communication theories.

The research offers foundational support for academic exploration of how communication methods influence service satisfaction across transportation and other public sector areas. This study serves as a reference point for researchers in related fields.

## **Literature Review**

### **History of Nigeria Railway Corporation**

The initial railway system in Nigeria originated during colonial times when the British laid down the first track in Lagos in 1898 to enable the transportation of agricultural goods from the hinterlands to Lagos for export purposes (NRC, 2022). The Lagos-Ibadan railway construction marked Nigeria's entry into formal railway development. By 1901 the railway line was extended to Abeokuta and Ibadan spanning approximately 190 kilometers (The Conversation Africa, 2023).

Major cities and regions gained rail connections in subsequent decades when the line expanded to Port-Harcourt on the Eastern line in 1916 followed by an extension to Enugu in 1926. The Northern line connecting Kaduna to Kano was also completed in 1912. The primary aim of railway during this period was to support the colonial economy by moving raw materials such as coca, palm oil, and groundnut to export ports (Conversation Africa, 2023).

Following its independence in 1960, Nigeria restructured its railway system into the Nigeria Railway Corporation (NRC) as mandated by the NRC Act. The Nigeria Railway Corporation reached its operational zenith during the decade of the 1960s and the start of the 1970s by becoming the essential component of Nigeria's transportation infrastructure for moving both freight and passengers. However, by the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, NRC encountered major setback due to road transport competition, poor maintenance practices, operational inefficiencies and corruption leading to a decline in service quality and patronage levels (NRC, 2022).

The Nigerian government initiated various reforms and investments to rejuvenate NRC due to rail transport's essential function. For example, the 1990s and early 2000s saw the start of rehabilitation work on old rail lines. Technical expertise and financial support from China helped the Nigerian government modernize railway infrastructure through international partnerships.

The opening of the Abuja-Kaduna rail line in 2016 marked an important development in Nigeria's effort to rejuvenate its rail transport system. The completion of Lagos-Ibadan Standard Gauge line followed in 2021. The new rail line between Lagos and Ibadan improved travel speed and efficiency. Development plans exist for major railway lines including the Lagos-Kano Standard Gauge and Port-Harcourt Maiduguri railway as well as links to neighbouring countries.

Despite the progress, the NRC still encounters challenges which include financial sustainability, insecurity and attacks on train, and need for government support. However, recent modernization activities demonstrate a dedication to reviving railway transport as a fundamental component of Nigeria's infrastructure after years of abandonment and difficulties.

### **Disruptions in Railway Transport System**

The modern business environment operates under constant change and unpredictability (Mizrak, 2024). An organization's ability to weather disruption and maintain stakeholder trust depends on how it manages crisis and emergency situations (Wut, Xu & Wong, 2021).

Railway operations experience unexpected events that either affects minor service disruptions or disturbances or significant disruptions. Train services experience delays when disturbances happen but remain operational without cancellations. When major disruption like track blockage occurs, multiple dispatching measures like retiming, reordering, cancelling and short-tuning trains are applied. Retiming, reordering trains, cancelling and short-tuning trains are standard practices that lead to delayed trains and modified schedules as well as completely cancelled trains and short-turned trains (Ghaemi et al, 2017).

The necessary contingency plan gets selected following these events. Passengers will encounter different train service options during disruptions compared to normal days because service availability changes. Zhu & Goverde (2019) state that numerous rerouting possibilities for passengers remain unexplored during disruptions which leads to unsatisfactory travel experiences for passengers.

### **Communication Approaches in Organizations**

Managing organizational activities depends heavily on effective communication between stakeholders. An organization functions optimally through a timely and clear communication

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which serves as the glue that binds and lubricant that facilitates an organization's smooth operation (Mwale & Shaju, 2022; Iberi, 2022). Consequently, ineffective communication breeds uncertainty, dissatisfaction and disengagement among stakeholders (Musheke & Phiri, 2021). Consequently, communication departments are placed at the heart of operations within public sector organizations because they handle responsibility delegation (Fredriksson & Pallas, 2018).

Effectiveness communication involves two-way exchange between the internal and external stakeholders. Clear communication brings substantial benefits to employees who are primary stakeholders because it improves understanding and cooperation while promoting organizational harmony. Properly informed employees are less likely to share misinformation, fostering trust and sense of belonging (Ezeh, 2020), which improves both employees performance and customer satisfaction (Mwale & Shaju, 2022).

Iberi (2022) presents several communication approaches to meet stakeholder needs effectively.

1. **Proactive Communication:** It is more effective to anticipate stakeholder needs and address them before problems develop than to respond to issues after they occur (Reno, 2015; Velaro, 2024).
2. **Training Frontline Staff:** Since frontline employees represent the organization to customers their communication abilities become critical for ensuring customer satisfaction. Employees who receive continuous training deliver high-quality service (Parasnis et al., 2022).
3. **Digital Communication Platforms:** Digital tools such as email, social media platforms, websites and mobile applications have revolutionized how organizations communicate. Digital platforms provide users with greater convenience and allow them to personalize interactions while facilitating immediate engagement (Astithi et al., 2024; Ezeh & Duru, 2020). Social media enables immediate interactive exchanges while extending audience reach and reducing operational costs (McGonagle, 2013; Ezeh & Mboso, 2018). Websites and mobile applications function as essential touchpoints which distribute information while engaging users to boost satisfaction levels (Christin, 2018; Rejman Petrovic et al., 2022).

4. **Feedback Mechanisms:** Organizations gain advantages by implementing systems designed to gather stakeholder input and then analyze it before formulating appropriate responses. Effective feedback processes allow organizations to address concerns and complaints and process suggestions in a timely and constructive manner.

Modern communication channels with proactive stakeholder engagement are critical to fulfilling stakeholder expectations and reaching organizational objectives. Organizations that prioritize effective communication practices can increase trust while enabling collaboration and improving satisfaction levels among both employees and customers. Delivering quality service helps organizations achieve customer satisfaction while building trust and loyalty.

### **Quality Service Delivery, Customer Satisfaction, Trust, and Loyalty**

Customer satisfaction represents the level of contentment customers experience after using a product or service based on whether their expectations are met or exceeded (Nalashi et al., 2020). Tse and Wilton (1988) explained that customer satisfaction occurs when products or services aligns with consumer expectations. Hermawati (2022), citing (Kotler et al., 1996), highlights four key indicators for measuring customer satisfaction: Customer satisfaction, complaints and suggestions, ghost shopping, former customer analysis and customer satisfaction surveys. High quality products and services enhance customer satisfaction which delivers positive outcomes for businesses. Customers who feel satisfied promote favorable word-of-mouth marketing but dissatisfied customers can spread negative testimonials that damage the company's reputation.

Wirtz and Mattila (2001) argue that satisfaction serves as a critical bridge between marketing strategies and post-purchase behaviours, such as attitude changes, brand loyalty, complaints, word-of-mouth promotional and repeat purchases. Similarly, (Patel, 2023) argues that customer satisfaction leads to stronger brand loyalty, increased trust and higher sales. Customers who are satisfied tend to refer the brand to others which enhances its market presence and brand awareness. According High customer satisfaction builds brand loyalty and generates increased revenue and business expansion (Romero et al., 2023; Coyles & Gokey 2002).

The extent to which customers continue to do business with a company shows their



loyalty level which stems from their satisfaction, positive experiences and the value they find in products and services (Sendpulse Academy, 2023). The continuous emotional bond between a customer and a brand represents customer loyalty as customers repeatedly patronize the brand and choose it over competitors (Oracle Blog, 2023; Brown, 2023). Positive experiences, high service delivery and high product quality generate customer loyalty. Customers who stay loyal to a brand demonstrate their strong preference despite the presence of substitute options (Ezeh, Odishika & Kachikwu, 2021; Ogwo & Igwe, 2012).

### **Information Quality**

According to (LISBDNETWORK, 2023), information is data that has been processed, organized or structured in a meaningful manner as to provide context, relevance and value to the users. People need information for personal use, professional development and social survival. Information is considered as a livewire for economic developments together with capital, labour, and raw materials; and the progress of any nation will be impossible unless and until information is made available to people who need it ( Manjunath & Babu, 2018)

High-quality information supports informed decision making which leads to meaningful outcomes and plays a crucial role in diminishing uncertainty while improving both the precision and speed of decisions (Howard et al., 2011; Alshikhi & Abdullah, 2018).

The characteristics of quality information include; accessibility, security, timeliness, accuracy, relevance, transparency, completeness, flexibility, reliability, objectivity, verifiability, utility, and reproducibility (McGonigle & Mastrain, 2023). Research by (Petter et al., 2012) and (Gable et al, 2008) points out accuracy, consistency, ease of understanding, personalization, and security as further indicators of quality information.

Low-quality information poses great challenges which include; decreased customer satisfaction, decrease loyalty and lower employee morale (Howard et al., 2011; Embury et al., 2009). Organizations struggle with decision-making and adapting to business rule changes when faced with poor information quality which impacts future business opportunities (Embury et al., 2009). Organizations that place a high priority on accuracy, relevance and timeliness can build trust among stakeholders while enhancing decision-making capabilities and user satisfaction (Duru & Ezeh, 2018).

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Media Richness Theory**

Richard Daft and Robert H. Lengel propounded Media Richness Theory in 1984 to assess communication channels within an organization. The original development of Media Richness Theory by Daft & Lengel in 1984 built upon Contingency theory before Daft, Lengel & Trevino enhanced it further in 1987. The media Richness theory also known as Information Richness Theory explains that media channels possess capabilities to convey necessary information. The effectiveness of information transmission depends on its application during periods of ambiguity or uncertainty. Media research has utilized this theory to explore organizational responses to communication problems which include unclear messages and conflicts in interpreting messages (Salleh & Moghavvemi, 2013).

The theory suggests that various communication media possess different levels of informational richness which enables them to be ranked by their ability to manage equivocality and uncertainty. The researchers Richard Daft and Robert H. Lengel categorized communication media into two types: lean and rich media. Lean media represents communication channels that possess restricted abilities to deliver rich, detailed, or nuanced information. These communication channels exhibit limited real-time feedback options while providing reduced multi-sensory input and offer minimal personalization and emotional engagement capabilities. Straightforward tasks with clear and routine messages fit well with lean media because they require little ambiguity. They perform poorly when handling complex or sensitive communications which demand clarification and emotional depth.

Rich media represents communication channels that can deliver messages with high detail and complex nuances. The channels provide instant feedback, multiple communication cues of both verbal and non-verbal signals; and enable personalization and emotional engagement. The digital media like social media has been known to provide people with easier and faster access to information and new opportunities to unmediated dialogue (Ezeh & Mboso, 2020). It has marked a major transformation in human, social and political communication and affected access to information and media use, communications and information costs;

maximizing speed, broadening reach, eradicating distance; and offering real-time clarification and negotiation (Ezeh & Ono, 2016). Digital media or platforms are also participatory in nature. Participatory media allows the users to play a major role in setting the agenda for what information is shared (Edegoh, Ezeh & Anunike, 2015). These capabilities rich media becomes perfect for handling tasks which involve high complexity and sensitive situations where misunderstandings need resolution.

According to the media Richness theory effective communication results from selecting media whose richness level aligns with the message complexity. The study uses this theory to determine whether NRC selects media that are adequately rich enough to manage essential tasks such as feedback resolution, complaint handling and passenger inquiries. The framework presented measures communication mediums by assessing their capacity to process complex and ambiguous information.

## **Method**

The study adopted a mixed research approach of combining the quantitative (Survey) and qualitative (In-depth interview, IDI) methods in assessing the communication strategies of the Nigeria Railway Corporation (NRC) in enhancing passenger experience and satisfaction. Survey research method was used in assessing communication practice of NRC and gathering passengers' perception of it. In-depth Interview was used in interrogating the NRC officials particularly staff members involved in communication, customers service, and operation management in order to understand their communication strategies in engaging passengers to ensure their satisfaction and loyalty.

This design helped the researcher in describing, interpreting and analyzing the communication strategies of NRC and how they influence passenger satisfaction. By combining both the quantitative and qualitative data, the study will offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of NRC's communication strategies and how it can be improved to enhance service delivery and passenger experience and satisfaction.

The study was conducted on the Lagos-Ibadan rail corridor which serves as one of Nigeria's most active routes hosting about 33,140 passengers each month. The research selected

this route because it benefits from modern infrastructure and its substantial passenger patronage. The study population consisted of passengers (33,140) and NRC staff (55) which comprised of customer service representatives, public relations officers, crisis response teams and social media managers.

Using Meyer's (1973) sample size determination formula, 381 sample size was determined. The study used Cluster sampling to divide the sample into groups based on train stations and time slots, and used purposive sampling technique to select three train stations based on their high passenger volume and strategic location. The stations selected are; Mobolaji Johnson Station in Alago, Babatunde Fashola Station in Agege, and Obafemi Awolowo Station in Moniya-Ibadan. The proportional allocation approach was used to distributed copies of questionnaire while convenience sampling method was used to select passengers from ticketing areas and lounges during both peak and off-peak hours. For the In-depth Interview (IDI), Purposive sampling technique was used to select 20 staff members of NRC, 5 from customer service representatives, 5 from public relation officers, 5 from crisis response team; and 5 from social media managers.

The survey utilized a structured questionnaire as its research instrument while an interview guide that guided the in-depth interviews. The survey data generated was analysis using descriptive statistics while correlation and Chi-square tests evaluated how NRC communication strategies related to passenger contentment. Researchers utilized SPSS Version 16 software for data analysis and implemented thematic analysis on interview data.

## **Result**

NRC passengers who boarded trains from seven stations received a total of 381 copies questionnaire but 376 only was valid for this study and that formed the basis for the analysis.

**Table 1**  
**How often do you use NRC services?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Daily	60	16.0	16.0	16.0
	Weekly	146	38.8	38.8	54.8
	Monthly	94	25.0	25.0	79.8
	Rarely	76	20.2	20.2	100.0
	Total	376	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 shows the frequency of use of the NRC services by the respondents. It shows that that majority (54%) of the respondents use NRC services either daily or weekly while 45.% of the respondents use it either monthly or rarely.

**Table 2**  
**communication channels mostly use to obtain information from the NRC**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Station and Onboard Announcement	199	52.9	52.9	52.9
	Helpdesk Services	62	16.5	16.5	69.4
	conventional Media	18	4.8	4.8	74.2
	Digital Media	63	16.8	16.8	91.0
	Brochures and Flyers	34	9.0	9.0	100.0
	Total	376	100.0	100.0	

Analysis of Table 2 reveals station announcements are the main source of information for 52.9% of respondents from NRC with digital platforms and helpdesk services coming next. The usage of brochures and flyers stands at 9.0% while conventional media shows a minimal impact with only 4.8%.

**Table 3**  
**How would you rate the effectiveness of NRC's communication channels in keeping you informed?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very effective	52	13.8	13.8	13.8
	Effective	52	13.8	13.8	27.7
	Can't Say	54	14.4	14.4	42.0
	Ineffective	128	34.0	34.0	76.1
	Very ineffective	90	23.9	23.9	100.0

How the respondents rate the effectiveness of NRC's communication channels in keeping them informed was sought. The data as presented on Table 3 show that majority (57.9%) of the

respondents rate NRC's communication channels as ineffective, 27.6% perceive it as effective while 14.4% of them are undecided. This suggests dissatisfaction with how well NRC keeps the passengers informed.

**Table 4**

**Quality of information provided by NRC regarding changes in schedule, cancellation or delay?**

		Timely Information	Clear Information	Responsive Complaints	to Easy access to Information
Valid	Strongly Agreed	9.0	22.9	7.2	10.4
	Agreed	14.9	30.3	39.6	20.7
	Not Sure	16.5	11.2	10.4	13.6
	Disagreed	36.4	17.6	29.0	41.2
	Strongly Disagreed	23.1	18.1	13.8	14.1

Table 4 data demonstrates that majority (59.5%) of respondents think NRC fails to provide timely updates regarding train schedule changes or cancellations. Over fifty-three point two percent of survey participants felt that NRC provides clear communication. Accessing the NRC communication platform presents challenges for 55.3% of respondents. Almost half of the passengers (46.8%) feel that NRC handles their complaints and takes action to resolve them. A total of 42.8% of respondents feel NRC ignores their complaints and 10.4% do not see any effect from their feedback.

**Table 5**

**NRC's communication strategies and passenger experience and satisfaction**

**Correlations**

			How timely is the information provided by NRC regarding changes in schedule, cancellation or delay?	. How responsive is NRC passenger feedback and complaints?	How easy is it for you to access NRC'Ss communicati on platforms?	How clear and understandabl e is the information you received from NRC	How satisfied are you with NRC's communicati on strategies?
Kendall's tau_b	How timely is the information provided by NRC regarding changes in schedule, cancellation or delay?	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.159**	.104*	.713**	.018
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.014	.000	.675
		N	376	376	376	376	376
	. How responsive is NRC passenger feedback and complaints?	Correlation Coefficient	.159**	1.000	-.051	.180**	.103*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.239	.000	.016
		N	376	376	376	376	376

How easy is it for you to access NRC's communication platforms?	Correlation Coefficient	.104*	-.051	1.000	.091*	.012
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.014	.239	.	.031	.773
	N	376	376	376	376	376
How clear and understandable is the information you received from NRC	Correlation Coefficient	.713**	.180**	.091*	1.000	.094*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.031	.	.025
	N	376	376	376	376	376
How satisfied are you with NRC's communication strategies?	Correlation Coefficient	.018	.103*	.012	.094*	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.675	.016	.773	.025	.
	N	376	376	376	376	376

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Correlation co-efficient was used to test this hypothesis. The results from the above Table 5 that presented a cross tabulation NRC's communication strategies and passenger experience and satisfaction show that the determined values shows that there is a significant relationship between NRC's communication strategies and passenger experience and satisfaction. However, clarity and responsiveness have the strongest significant.

### Responses from the In-Depth Interview (IDI)

#### **The Nigeria Railway Corporation (NRC) uses specific communication strategies for passenger interactions.**

The Nigeria Railway Corporation (NRC) uses different methods to communicate with its passengers. Public address systems at train stations deliver information about train schedules and notify passengers of delays and cancellations while giving boarding instructions. Notice boards provide train schedules together with ticket prices and available classes details. Flyers containing information about routes and services along with safety guidelines are distributed at times. Stations feature customer service sections to help passengers obtain information and support. Onboard conductors provide passengers with information regarding upcoming stops and safety procedures as well as any service delays.

The official website of NRC serves as a platform where passengers can obtain information. The organization has started to use mobile applications to enable ticket reservations and deliver real-time train service updates. The organization utilizes Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to distribute information and answer passenger questions. Passengers can access information by calling the provided hotlines.

**Passenger feedback reveals mixed opinions about the communication quality of Nigeria Railway Corporation.**

Officials from NRC recognize that passengers provide varying feedback regarding the corporation's communication quality. Numerous passengers praised the corporation for their real-time information updates via their Facebook and Instagram channels during service interruptions. Station staff and helpdesk services earn positive feedback from passengers who value both public announcements and digital updates as helpful measures.

Multiple passengers reported dissatisfaction with the timeliness and clarity of information received. NRC officials confirmed that many passengers believe information about service disruptions and schedule adjustments is delivered ineffectively resulting in continuous complaints. Many passengers find public address announcements to be difficult to understand and hear especially when they are made in loud stations. Real-time updates on all issues remain an expectation for passengers yet infrastructure and technological constraints often prevent their delivery.

**The communication strategies used by NRC demonstrate how well they succeed in engaging passengers while providing them with timely updates.**

The corporate communication team states that both the medium of delivery and the urgency of information determine communication effectiveness. Facebook along with Twitter and Instagram have shown great success in keeping passengers engaged particularly in emergency situations. Passengers find onboard announcements concerning stops and delays together with safety information to be beneficial. Helpdesk personnel and public address systems at stations provide effective solutions for solving passengers' urgent issues.

Staff recognized that providing timely updates about cancellations and delays continues to pose a significant problem. Staff coordination issues and technical challenges add to this problem. A number of passengers either lack digital platform access or reside in areas with unreliable network coverage. Passengers pointed out differences between the information on digital platforms and the messages displayed at stations. The staff observed a steady reduction in unclear communication complaints, which they interpreted as evidence of progress despite



ongoing challenges. Plans were discussed to implement automated notification systems and mobile app enhancements to increase update efficiency. The organization launched training programs aimed at station communication staff and onboard personnel to maintain clear and consistent information delivery. The staff highlighted their growing practice of analyzing passenger feedback to pinpoint communication deficiencies and make required changes.

**How NRC develops its communication strategies affects passenger satisfaction levels.**

Staff members insisted that passenger satisfaction depends largely on effective communication methods. Passengers who obtain travel information that is accurate and delivered promptly experience increased feelings of appreciation and reduced frustration levels. Passengers feel less dissatisfied when they receive early information about delays or cancellations. The Corporation received higher satisfaction ratings from passengers who followed their digital platforms as these passengers had access to real-time information. Passengers receive immediate personalized support from station public helpdesks which helps increase their satisfaction.

**Discussion and Findings**

The study participants regularly used NRC services since more than half traveled with it every week. Frequent users of NRC service develop better awareness of the Corporation's communication methods which enables them to evaluate the effectiveness and reliability of those methods more precisely.

Research question one investigated how the Nigeria Railway Corporation communicates with its passengers. According to the study results over half the respondents (52.9%) primarily depend on station announcements to get travel information from the NRC because announcements represent the main communication channel the NRC uses to update passengers. Digital media platforms such as social media platforms, SMS messages, and mobile applications follow the announcement methods as secondary communication channels. The interview session revealed that NRC communication staff members utilize traditional communication channels such as helpdesk services and station announcements along with digital methods to engage passengers.

Station and onboard announcements remain critical communication methods used for delivering real-time information regarding boarding times, delays and schedule changes. Passengers at train stations receive live updates through announcements but digital media delivers information to passengers no matter where they are located. The data shows that tech-savvy users are increasingly depending on digital media to receive updates. Business strategy now incorporates digital media as a fundamental component to achieve customer satisfaction through channels such as email, social media, mobile application and websites according to Olugbemi et al. (2020), and Asthiti, Suryadharma and Lubis (2024) demonstrated that these channels improve customer satisfaction by enhancing convenience, personalization, real-time communication and service delivery.

Passengers acquire information through the helpdesk services. Passengers show a strong preference for direct or one-on-one interactions when they need to make inquiries or lodge complaints. Passenger satisfaction levels increase with the personalized support passengers receive from helpdesk services. The front liners such as helpdesk staff achieve customer satisfaction through effective communication while simultaneously making a memorable impact on customers according to Parasnis, Deshpande & Shinde (2022). A mere 4.8% of survey respondents depend on traditional media sources such as radio and television and newspapers to obtain information which demonstrates how traditional communication channels have diminished influence in travel and passenger communication.

A high reliance on Station Announcements reveals that NRC operates through a "lean" medium in Media Richness Theory because these announcements depend on one-way communication and lack immediate feedback options. Their heavy dependence on station announcements exists because they provide easy access and immediate information delivery. The substantial deployment of helpdesk services improves the current situation associated with station announcements by allowing passengers to rapidly resolve their queries with helpdesk personnel.

The second research question focused on understanding passenger perceptions regarding the communication quality provided by Nigeria Railway Corporation. The majority of survey

participants found the process of obtaining information from NRC difficult which indicates that NRC's communication channels suffer from accessibility and usability issues. Standardizing communication channels to make them simpler would improve user engagement and help all users access required information more easily. When passengers face issues accessing schedule information or train cancellation updates they become frustrated which leads to decreased trust and satisfaction with the service. Passengers reported their perception about how clear the NRC's communication messages were. More than half of the respondents (53.2%) felt that NRC provided clear information. The fact that more than one-third of respondents rated the information as unclear demonstrates that NRC needs to evaluate its communication methods to improve information accessibility and clarity. Public transportation services need clear communication because passengers depend on accurate and easy-to-understand information to make their travel arrangements. Because station announcements serve as the main travel information source for respondents unclear information often results from background noise at busy train stations.

Most passengers report that the Nigeria Railway Corporation (NRC) fails to provide timely information about schedule changes and cancellations or delays. Results from IDI demonstrate that communication staff members recognize many passengers experience poor information delivery about delays and schedule changes. The survey revealed that passengers frequently expressed dissatisfaction with how timely and clear NRC information delivery was which has repeatedly been a complaint. The results demonstrate that 46.8% of the participants who responded think NRC effectively addresses passenger feedback and complaints. The fact that 42.8% of survey respondents felt that NRC was not responsive indicates possible shortcomings in customer service which may impact overall customer satisfaction. The NRC demonstrates insufficient consistency in its approach to addressing passenger concerns to their satisfaction.

The study's outcome supports the IDI session findings where interviewed employees identified insufficient technology infrastructure as the cause of ineffective communication strategies. An effective information delivery system must be both quick and dependable to lessen

the issues of uncertainty and frustration passengers face due to unexpected changes. Users of information and decision makers in organizations face an information quality problem which represents one of their most critical issues (Alshikhi & Abdullah, 2018). When organizations use the information for operational and strategic decisions they face higher estimated cost of revenue coverage (Alshikhi & Abdullah, 2018). The expenses stem from diminished customer loyalty and satisfaction which lead to fewer future business prospects as well as lowered employee morale and restricted capability to modify business rules and policies (Embury et al 2009). Media richness serves as a tool to fulfill passenger communication needs which helps to build trust in public service systems. The communication staff's poor coordination leads to the ineffectiveness of communication strategies. Teams that work well depend on good communication throughout their process (Iberi, 2022) alongside essential collaboration which drives performance and helps make decisions (Mwale & Shaju, 2022).

Research question three examined how effective NRC's communication strategies were at engaging passengers and providing them with updates. Passengers found the NRC's communication methods ineffective at keeping them informed. The respondents recognized problems with NRC's information regarding timeliness and clarity which explains why they found the communication strategies ineffective. The 27.6% of passengers who found the communication channels effective indicate that NRC's communication methods succeed for certain user groups or types of information. The management of passenger expectations requires effective communication especially when schedule changes or delays occur. When organizational communication channels are perceived as ineffective they create uncertainty and apprehension among employees which leads to dissatisfaction and poor productivity. (Musheke & Phiri, 2021). When NRC responds to these concerns passengers will experience increased satisfaction along with stronger confidence in their services.

## **Conclusion**

NRC uses a “lean” medium according to Media Richness Theory because of their high usage of Station Announcement as they typically involve one-way communication without

opportunities for immediate feedback. NRC has established multiple communication channel, however, significant gaps still remains in accessibility, clarity, responsiveness, and timeliness of information.

Passengers expressed dissatisfaction with the unclear, untimely, inconsistent and unresponsive on the information provided by the NRC. The heavy reliance on lean communication channels like station announcement limited the effectiveness of NRC communication strategies.

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