

Customer Satisfaction with Intercity Bus Terminal Services: A Case Study of Magufuli Intercity Bus Terminal, Dar es Salaam

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Abstract:

Passenger Satisfaction is one of the central considerations in ascertaining mass transit systems' quality, operational efficiencies, as well as responsiveness. It enables transit agencies, policy analysts, as well as planners of cities, to clearly identify gaps in service and systematically embark on improvement efforts. This study analyzes customer satisfaction with intercity bus terminal services at Magufuli Intercity Bus Terminal in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The terminal, a modern transport hub, was designed to address previous inefficiencies in urban mobility. However, despite infrastructural improvements, user satisfaction remains a challenge. The study used a cross-sectional design, drawing data from 50 respondents through questionnaires, interviews, and observation. Results show moderate satisfaction levels with ticketing services, particularly physical counters and staff professionalism. However, dissatisfaction was notable regarding queue management and digital ticketing options. Safety and security services were generally viewed positively, although gaps existed in surveillance, lighting, and emergency systems. Waiting lounge amenities raised concerns over toilet cleanliness, limited charging points, and poor ventilation. The study concludes that infrastructural quality alone does not guarantee customer satisfaction; operational efficiency, technological access, and user-centered services are equally essential. Recommendations include improving sanitation, promoting digital ticketing, enhancing emergency preparedness, and investing in customer feedback systems.

Keywords: Customer Satisfaction, Intercity Bus Terminal Services, Magufuli Bus Terminal

Introduction:

Passenger Satisfaction is one of the central considerations in ascertaining mass transit systems' quality, operational efficiencies, as well

as responsiveness. It enables transit agencies, policy analysts, as well as planners of cities, to clearly identify gaps in service and systematically

embark on improvement efforts (Ismail et al., 2023). By capturing passengers' perceptions as well as expectations, research on satisfaction enables further investigation of commuting experiences as a foundation in improving services in alignment with commuters' concerns (Weng et al., 2018). Comfort, convenience, cleanliness, punctuality, accessibility, as well as perceived security, among others, have tended to feature in such inquiries as central parameters in determining passenger experience in general. For the broader transportation infrastructure framework, intercity bus terminals serve as necessary points of connectivity between diverse rural and urban regions, and in most scenarios, serve as main long-distance movement modes among the general population, especially in rising nations. In the view of Mwendapole and Jin (2020), operational intercity terminals serve necessary components of sustainable national mobility systems as well as of regional integration. With growing cities and rising population, design of the terminal, operational efficiency, as well as people-centered administration, becomes increasingly important. These bus terminals have expanded way beyond mere embarkation and disembarkation spaces; they can be described as dynamic, multurpose spaces shaping passengers' perceptions of quality of service in addition to mobility in cities.

Tanzania, like most emerging markets, is going through rapid urbanization that is subjecting transport infrastructure to immense pressure. In response, the state has concentrated on large scale investments in intra-city transportation systems, such as building state-of-the-art intercity bus terminals. A good example is the Magufuli Intercity Bus Terminal in Dar es Salaam, developed as a measure of enhancing urban transport management as well as replacing congested Ubungo terminal. Figure 1 show Magufuli Bus terminal at Mbezi with modern amenities, streamlined traffic flows, improved

security features, as well as expanded space, improved amenities, etc., the terminal was expected to offer an improved, easy-to-access, as well as efficient, commuting experience. Even with such developments, few empirical surveys have been carried out to determine how far the terminal fulfills the aspirations and needs of users. Getting a glimpse of passengers' perceptions is not only essential in gauging current service quality but in directing future strengthening of infrastructure as well as policy interventions. Because most urban transport centers serve mixed socio-economic groups of people, a universal approach may have a blind spot towards noteworthy variations in expectations of users, accessibility, as well as levels of satisfaction.

Importantly, this study identifies three of service dimensions as most vital in passenger experience in Magufuli Terminal: ticketing, security/safety, and facilities in waiting lounges. Ticketing reflects operational ease of use, smoothness, and transparency as well as how passengers evaluate fairness, rapidness, and ease of use. Security/safety is a base of passenger confidence in facilities together with operational functionalities, especially in central business districts where crime or confusion can drive away use. Third, facilities in waiting lounges encompass seating provision, information displays, as well as beverages, as they determine how passengers will rate general travel experience. Through systematic exploration of these dimensions, this research aims at unveiling the strengths and weaknesses of the Magufuli Intercity Bus Terminal based on perceptions of its users. This is vital in furthering a passenger-centric approach towards planning in public transport, whereby levels of service respond to shifts in expectations, travel behavior, as well as socio-economic developments. In doing so, the study furthers a broader discussion in relation to sustainable mobility in cities as well as sub-Saharan African transport infrastructure optimization.



Figure 1 : A picture of Magufuli Bus Terminal located at Mbezi, Dar es Salaam

Methodology:

The research adopted a qualitative and quantitative (mixed-method) approach using a cross-sectional design. A total of 50 respondents were selected from terminal staff, LATRA officials, bus company representatives, and passengers. Data were collected through structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and direct observation. Statistical analysis was conducted using Microsoft Excel to generate frequencies and percentages. The study focused on three variables: ticketing satisfaction, terminal safety, and lounge amenities.

Findings and Discussion:

Ticketing Services:

Most respondents were satisfied with ticket availability (70%) and staff professionalism. However, dissatisfaction emerged regarding queue management and digital ticketing options. Only 24% used mobile ticketing apps, indicating limited digital literacy or system promotion. Similar findings were reported by Eboli and Mazzulla (2007), who emphasized the role of information systems in enhancing service accessibility.

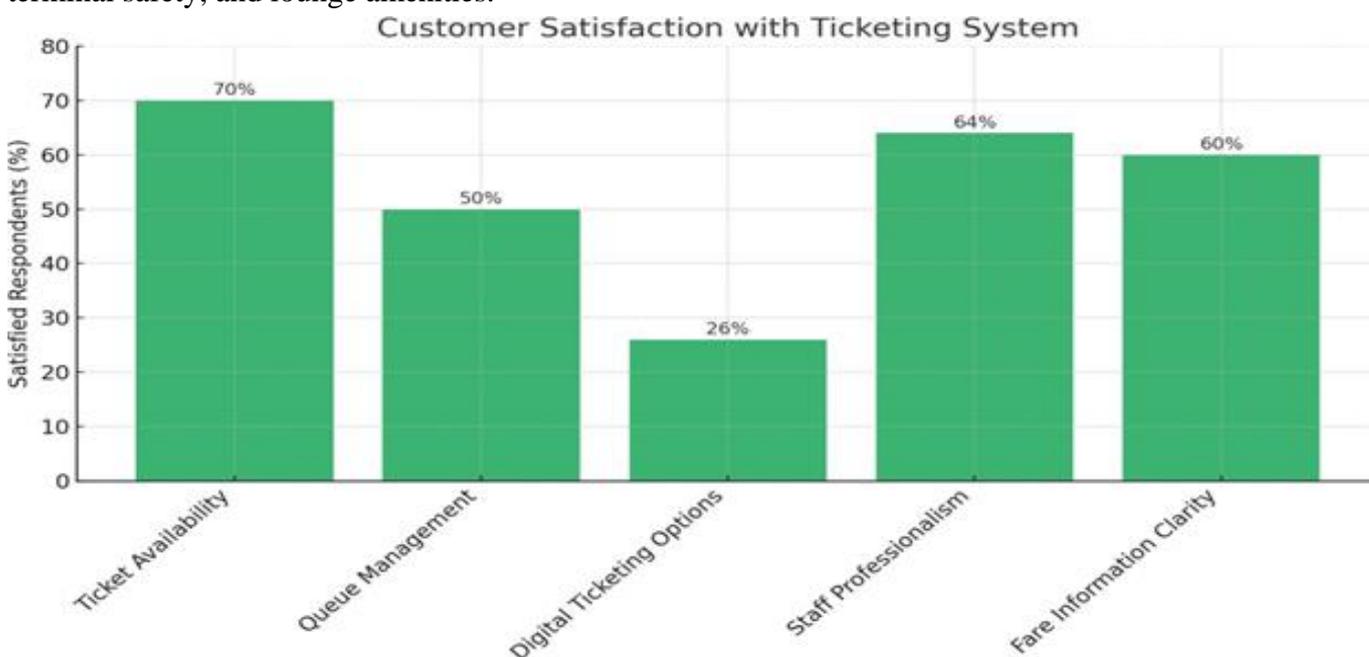


Figure 1: Customer Satisfaction with Ticketing System

Figure 1 provides a visual overview of respondents' satisfaction levels with various elements of the ticketing system at Magufuli Intercity Bus Terminal. The highest satisfaction was recorded in ticket availability (70%), indicating that most passengers find it relatively easy to access tickets at the terminal. This aligns with previous findings by Aidoo et al. (2013), who emphasized that availability and accessibility of basic services are key drivers of customer satisfaction in public transport systems.

Staff professionalism also scored positively, with 64% of respondents expressing satisfaction. This highlights the importance of human interaction in shaping the customer experience, particularly in environments where digital systems are still developing. Similar insights were reported by Govender (2015), who noted that frontline staff behavior greatly influences overall passenger perceptions in service delivery settings.

On the other hand, digital ticketing options received the lowest satisfaction rating, with only 26% of respondents indicating positive experiences. This suggests low awareness, limited

access, or operational inefficiencies in existing digital platforms. These findings are consistent with Eboli and Mazzulla (2007), who noted that the integration of digital systems requires both infrastructure and user readiness to be effective.

Queue management (50%) and clarity of fare information (60%) were rated moderately, reflecting areas that may require process improvements and clearer communication strategies. Poor queue handling can significantly affect service perception, especially during peak hours. Moreover, lack of transparent fare information may lead to confusion and mistrust, especially among first-time users or travelers from other regions.

Overall, the data suggest that while the ticketing process at Magufuli Terminal performs adequately in traditional, manual systems, there is significant room for modernization and digital transformation. Addressing the digital gap and improving service processes can lead to greater efficiency, shorter wait times, and improved overall customer satisfaction.

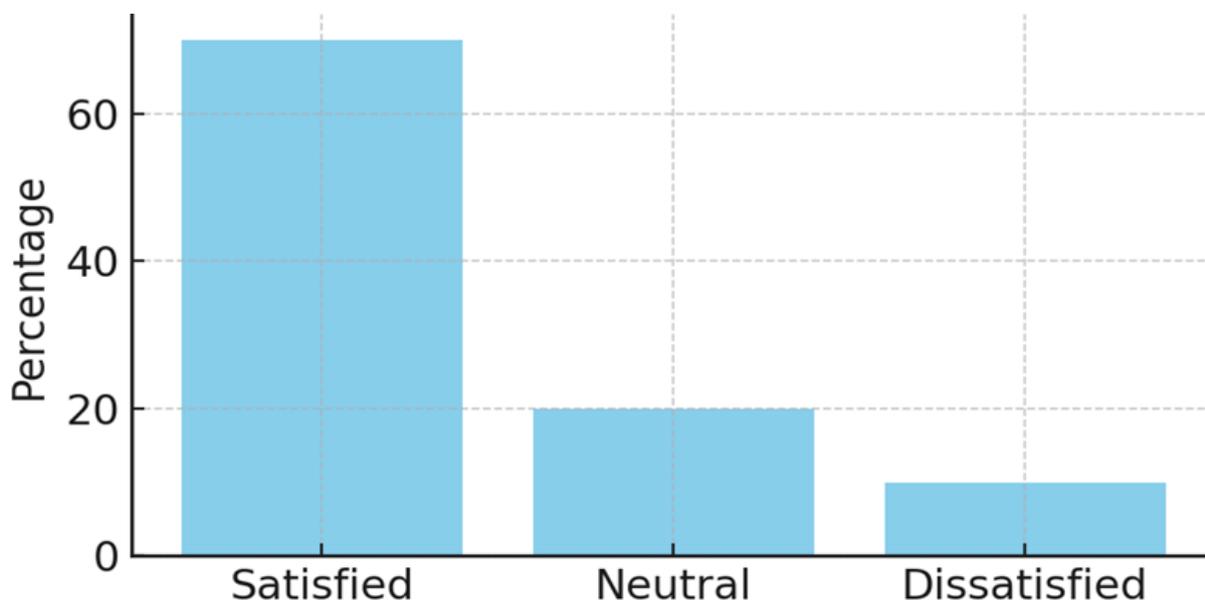


Figure 2: Ticket Availability Satisfaction

Figure 2. illustrates that the high satisfaction rate (70%) for ticket availability indicates efficient management of physical ticket distribution. This

performance highlights strong customer service at point-of-sale counters. However, seasonal congestion may still affect ticket flow. According

to Mjema et al. (2020), availability of travel documents at accessible points is a fundamental benchmark of user experience, especially in high-

traffic intercity terminals. Continuous monitoring and demand forecasting can help maintain this level of satisfaction.

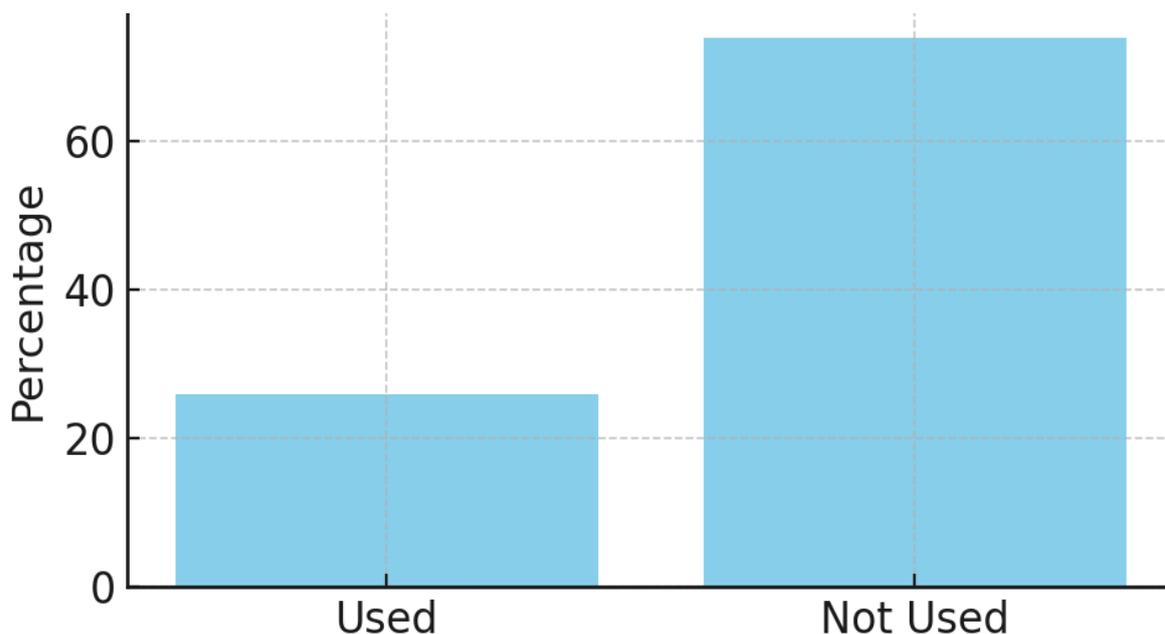


Figure 3: Digital Ticketing Usage

In Figure 3 shows that. only 26% of respondents had used digital ticketing options, which points to a serious underutilization of modern platforms. Barriers such as lack of awareness, low digital literacy, and technical failures might be contributing factors. Ngoma & Ally (2021) emphasized that while digital ticketing reduces queues and improves convenience, successful implementation depends on proper onboarding and trust-building among users. Kweka & Juma (2021) also stressed the role of government support and operator investment in ICT infrastructure.

Safety and Security:

Respondents praised the presence of security personnel and baggage checks. However, concerns were raised about lighting, surveillance, and emergency exits. These findings align with Shaaban and Khalil (2013), who noted that physical infrastructure must be matched with operational readiness to ensure safety in terminals. The terminal is equipped with uniformed security guards at multiple entry and exit points, providing visible deterrents to crime. Over 76% of respondents acknowledged the presence of these personnel as a factor that contributed positively to

their sense of safety. However, significant concerns were raised by 48% of participants regarding the limited number of CCTV surveillance cameras and blind spots, particularly around the restrooms, food courts, and nighttime ticket counters. Emergency systems such as fire extinguishers and alarms were found by observation to be either poorly marked or inaccessible. Respondents also highlighted the absence of emergency evacuation drills or signage. These findings are consistent with studies by Lwiza and Kyando (2022) and Tumbo & Chuwa (2019), which emphasize the need for integrated safety strategies that go beyond personnel and involve clear protocols, user awareness, and visible emergency infrastructure. Figure 3. illustrates the distribution of passenger responses regarding key safety and security elements at the Magufuli Intercity Bus Terminal. The chart categorizes perceptions into positive, neutral, and negative based on survey data. Notably, daytime safety and the need for improved lighting received the highest positive ratings, while concerns remain regarding nighttime security and the safety of vulnerable groups such as women and persons with disabilities.

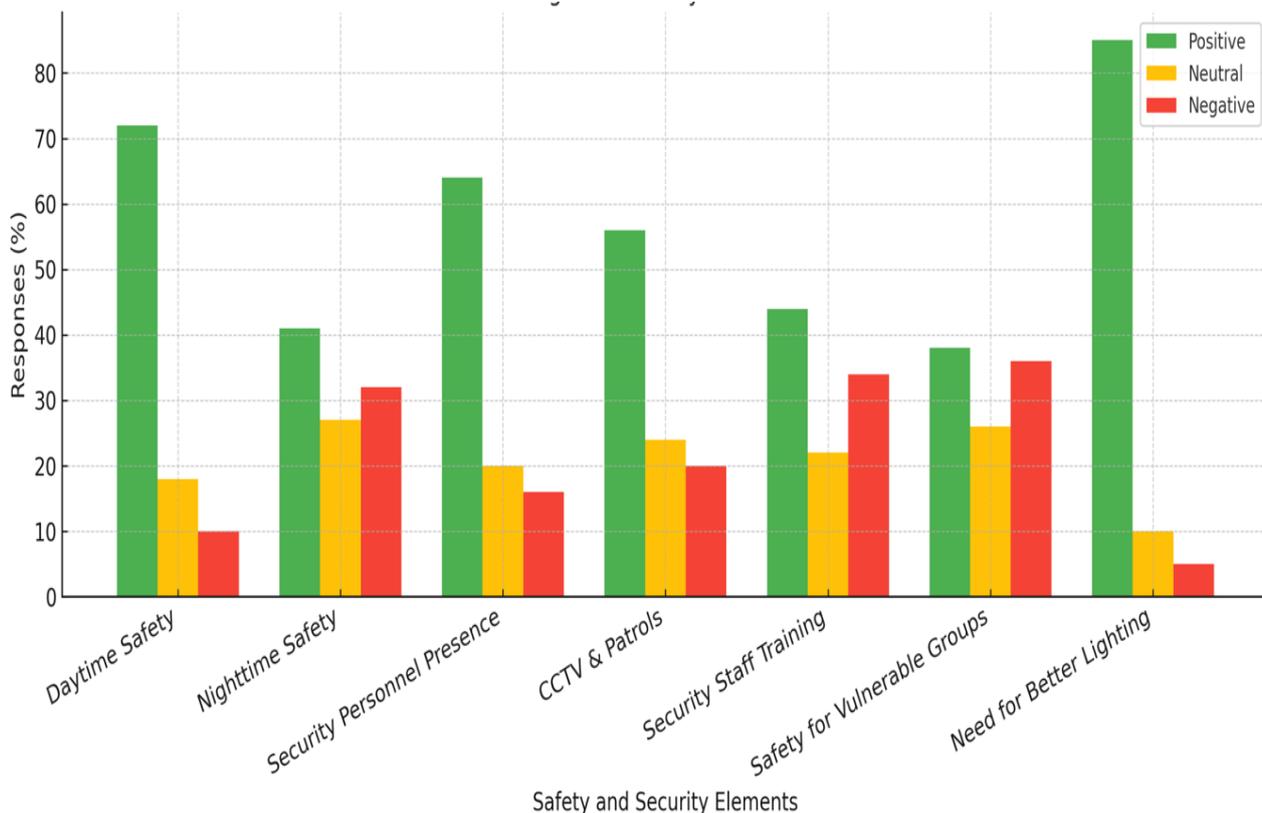


Figure 4: Passenger Perception of safety and Security Measures at Magufuli Intercity Bus Terminal

Waiting Lounge Amenities:

Cleanliness and seating scored moderately well, but 60% of respondents called for cleaner toilets, and 50% asked for more charging points. Poor

ventilation was also cited. Friman and Felleson (2009) argue that environmental comfort is essential in retaining user trust in public transport terminals.

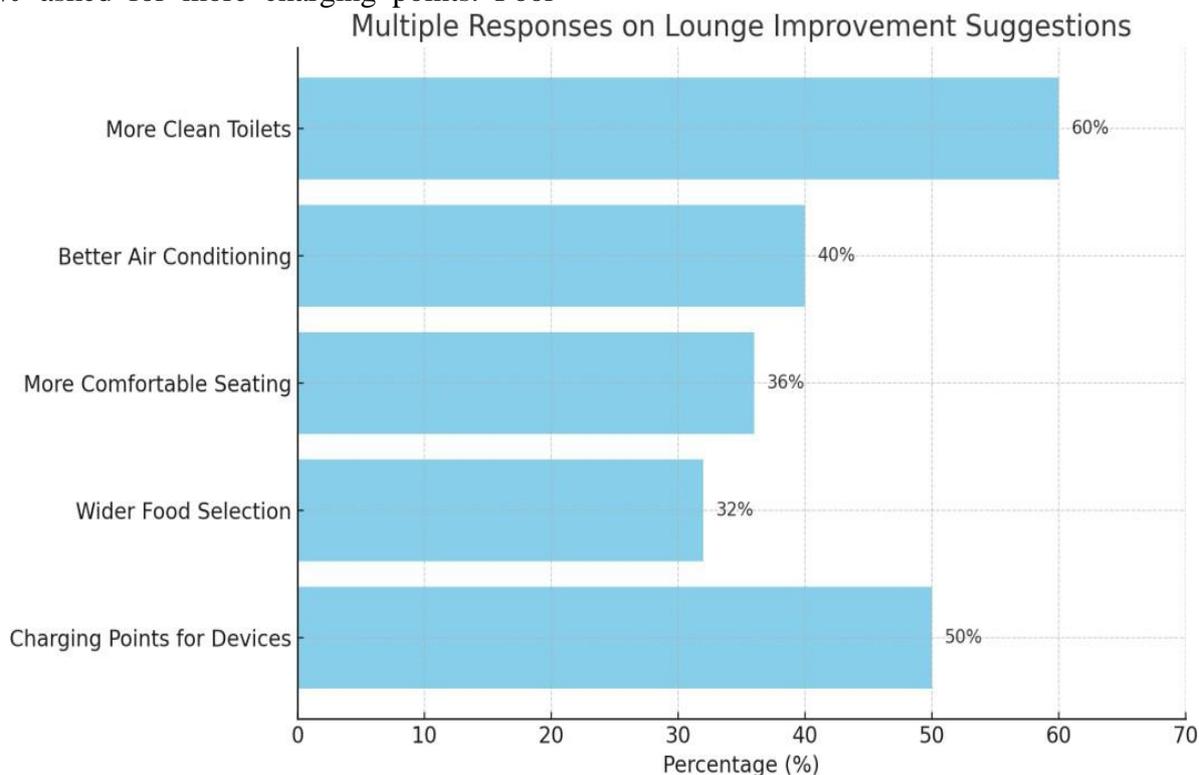


Figure 5: Multiple Responses on Lounge Improvement Suggestions

Figure 6. show Toilet hygiene dissatisfaction at 60% highlights a core issue in service delivery. Sanitary facilities are directly linked to health, dignity, and overall perception of a terminal’s professionalism. Masanja (2018) and Tumbo & Chuwa (2019) both identify cleanliness as a major

factor influencing terminal use, especially for vulnerable groups like the elderly, women, and children. Toilets should be maintained hourly and monitored with cleanliness dashboards for transparency.

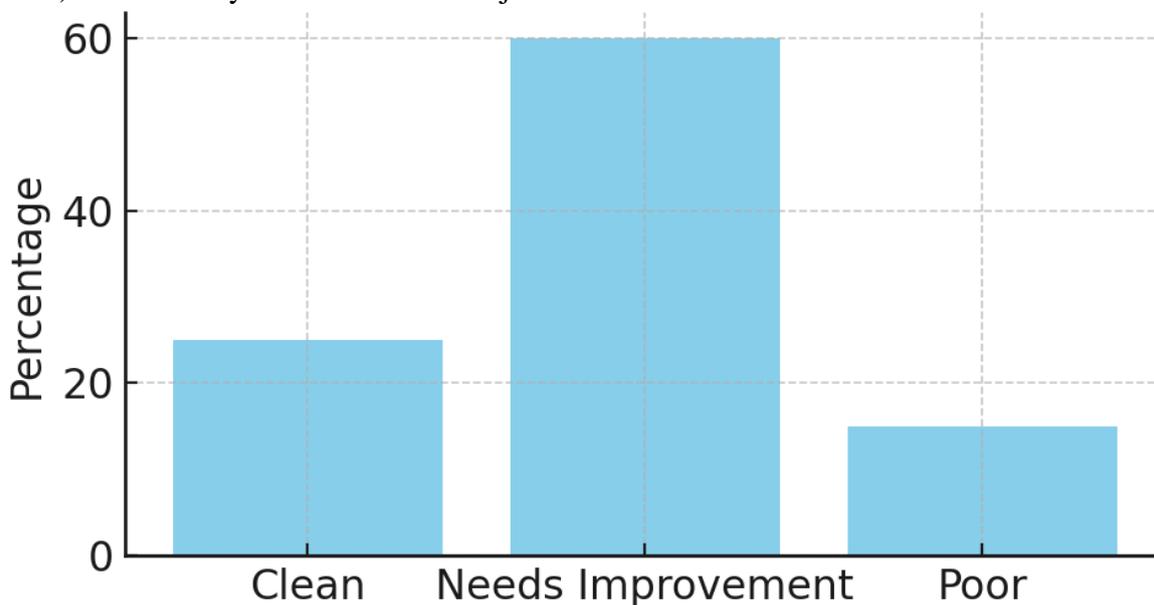


Figure 6: Toilet Cleanliness Feedback

With mobile phones now essential for travel coordination, payments, and safety, the 50% dissatisfaction rate over charging points reflects an urgent infrastructural gap. Mnyanyi & Mbonde (2020) recommend that terminals be reconfigured

with accessible and tamper-proof charging docks. These should be placed at waiting lounges, near food courts, and along boarding zones to accommodate all passenger needs as shown in Figure 7.

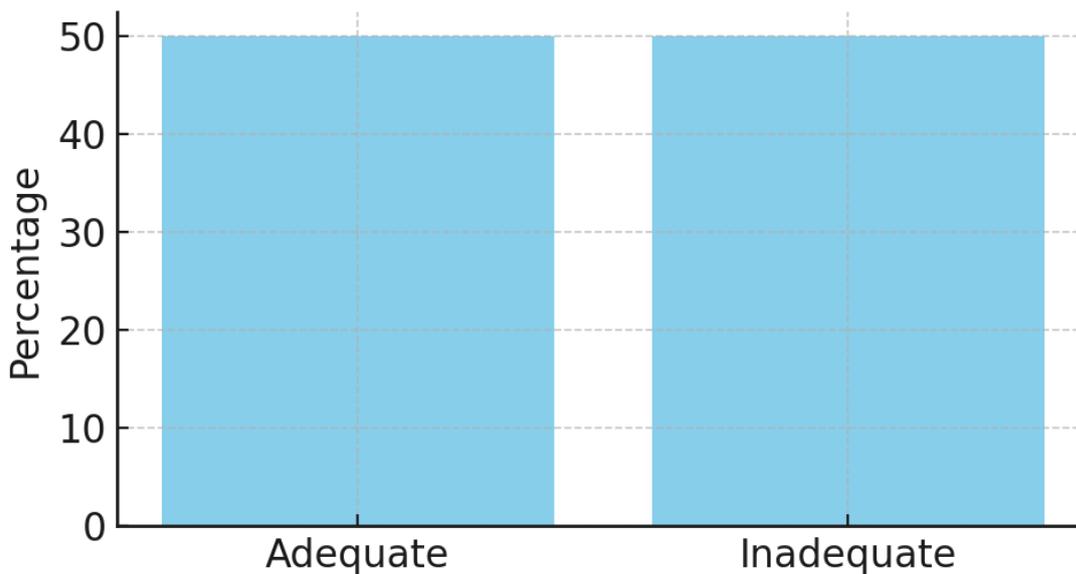


Figure 7: Availability of Charging Stations

The poor ventilation experience reported by 42% of respondents suggests discomfort due to

stagnant air, humidity, or overcrowding. This is particularly concerning in the context of public

health (e.g., COVID-19). Waziri & Mzava (2023) highlight the importance of mechanical ventilation systems, air circulation fans, and natural

ventilation in closed terminals. Adequate airflow improves comfort, reduces fatigue, and increases perceived safety as shown in Figure 8.

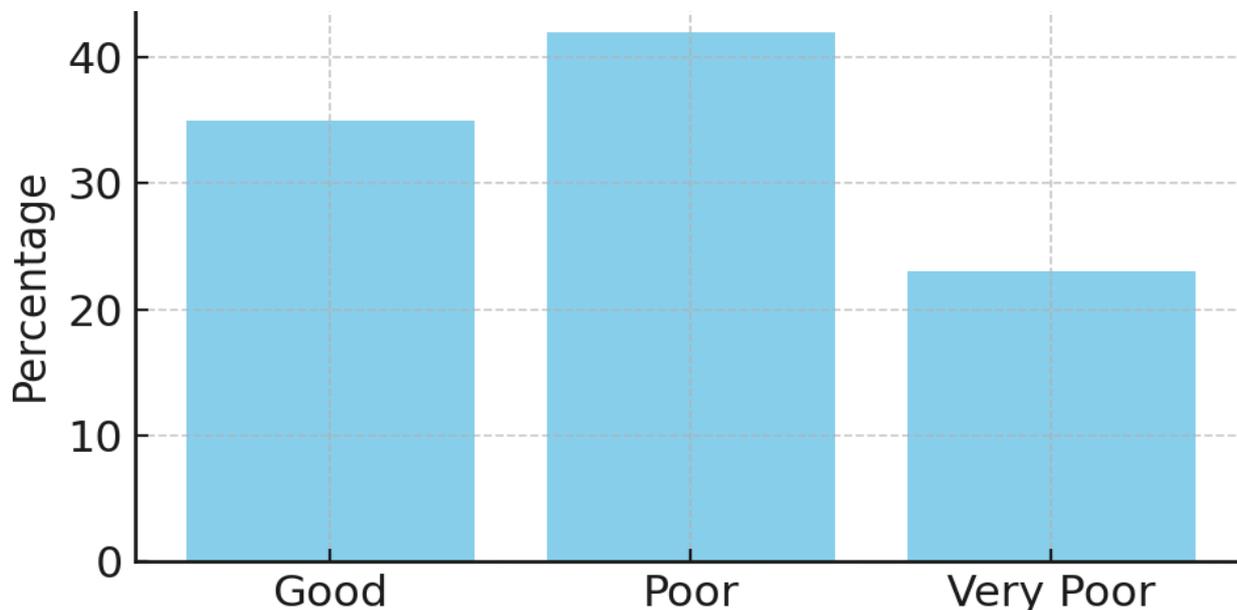


Figure 7: Ventilation Quality in Lounges

Conclusion and Recommendations:

Conclusions:

Customer satisfaction at Magufuli Bus Terminal is influenced by both infrastructure and operational service quality. While improvements in space and basic services are evident, gaps in sanitation, digital services, and safety systems persist. Terminal management must balance structural investments with human-centered service delivery to meet modern transport standards. This study revealed that while the Magufuli Intercity Bus Terminal showcases structural investments and improved design, user satisfaction continues to be constrained by service delivery challenges. Customers voiced significant concerns over sanitation standards, inefficient queue management, and the limited adoption of digital platforms. Security personnel were appreciated, yet respondents demanded more proactive safety mechanisms such as well-placed surveillance and emergency readiness. Comfort-related issues such as toilet hygiene, ventilation, and availability of tech support (charging stations) were highlighted as major contributors to dissatisfaction. These

findings underscore the need for holistic terminal management that integrates physical design with human-centered services, modern technology, and responsive feedback systems. Sustainable satisfaction requires both tangible (infrastructure) and intangible (service quality) improvements, as well as consistent monitoring and public engagement.

Recommendations:

It is recommended to clearly mark and routinely inspect emergency exits, installing fire alarms equipped with audio-visual cues, complemented by implementing regular emergency evacuation drills for both passengers and staff. Additionally, developing a dedicated mobile app to streamline ticket booking, issue timely notifications, and collect passenger feedback will significantly enhance operational convenience. Allocating a dedicated budget for daily sanitation maintenance, especially during peak hours, and redesigning waiting lounges with improved airflow, ceiling fans, and filtered vents are essential for ensuring comfort. Equipping charging stations with clearly labeled ports and consistently monitoring their

power uptime, coupled with comprehensive training for terminal staff in customer service, emergency response, and digital literacy, will significantly enhance operational efficiency and passenger satisfaction. Finally, deploying multilingual signs and announcements is critical to effectively assist travelers from diverse regions.

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