

# Customer Perspectives on Service Improvement at Julius Nyerere International Airport (JNIA) Toward Enhancing Satisfaction and Loyalty

Flora Cosmas<sup>1</sup> & Albert Tibajjuka<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, St. Augustine University of Tanzania

ARTICLE INFORMATION	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article history:</b>            Published: March 2026</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b>            Customer satisfaction            Airport service quality            Service improvement            SERVQUAL, aviation industry.</p>	<p>This article examined customer perspective on service improvement at Julius Nyerere International Airport (JNIA) with the aim of determining how service enhancement influences passenger satisfaction and loyalty. The study formed part of objective to find out the views of customer on services improvement at JNIA in order to attain customer satisfaction and loyalty. Study guided by the SERVQUAL model, which identifies service quality dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. A mixed-methods design was used, comprising questionnaires distributed to departing passengers and semi-structured interviews with customer service providers. Data derived focused on understanding passengers' perceptions of service improvement needs at JNIA. Findings indicate that while passengers appreciate the airport's modern facilities, improved terminal infrastructure, and courteous staff interactions, several service gaps persist. These include delays in baggage handling, inconsistent complaint resolution processes, limited accessibility services and inadequate airport signage. Many respondents expressed that these areas significantly influence their satisfaction levels and determine whether they will continue to use the airport or recommend it to others. Finding indicate that targeted improvements within the SERVQUAL dimensions are essential to strengthening passenger satisfaction and fostering loyalty at JNIA. Finding conclude for staff training, investment in digital technologies, creation of dedicated help points, improved accessibility services, and more efficient operational processes. The study contributes to the growing literature on African aviation service quality and offers practical insights for policy makers, airport managers, and stakeholders aiming to elevate passenger experiences in an increasingly competitive aviation environment.</p>

## 1. Introduction

Airports play a critical role in shaping the travel experience, influencing customer satisfaction, and determining passenger loyalty. As the primary international gateway to Tanzania, Julius Nyerere International Airport (JNIA) carries both strategic and economic importance as it facilitates international arrivals, tourism inflows, and commercial activities. Customer service at airports is particularly significant because it directly affects passengers' perceptions of safety, efficiency, comfort, and the overall travel experience. Scholars argue that high-quality service in aviation leads to improved competitiveness, repeat patronage, and positive word-of-mouth recommendations (Namukasa, 2013; Park et al., 2004). In this context, improvements in service at JNIA are essential to ensuring customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Customer service quality has become a key determinant of passenger satisfaction in airport environments. Passengers evaluate their experience not only based on flight operations but also on the quality of services encountered during airport processes such as check-in, security screening, baggage handling, and customer assistance (Valarie A. Zeithaml et al., 2018). When these services meet or exceed customer expectations, satisfaction and loyalty are more likely to occur (Philip Kotler & Kevin Lane Keller, 2016).

One of the most widely used frameworks for assessing service quality is the SERVQUAL model developed by A. Parasuraman, Valarie A. Zeithaml, and Leonard L. Berry (1988). The model identifies five key dimensions of service quality: tangibility refers to the physical appearance of facilities and equipment, reliability reflects the ability of service providers to perform services dependably, responsiveness refers to the willingness of employees to assist customers promptly, assurance relates to the knowledge and courtesy of staff and empathy represents the provision of individualized attention to customers. These dimensions provide an effective framework for evaluating passenger perceptions of airport services and identifying areas that require improvement.

In recent years, the aviation industry in Tanzania has experienced significant growth due to increasing passenger traffic, expanding tourism activities, and improvements in airport infrastructure. As the main international gateway of the country, Julius Nyerere International Airport plays a critical role in facilitating both domestic and international travel. The airport handles thousands of passengers daily and serves as a major hub connecting Tanzania with other regions of Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. To accommodate the growing number of passengers, several improvements have been made at the airport,

including the development of modern terminal facilities, improved passenger handling systems, and enhanced security procedures (Correia, Wirasinghe, & de Barros, 2008; Fodness & Murray, 2007).

Despite these developments, challenges related to customer service delivery continue to be reported by passengers. Issues such as delays in service provision, insufficient communication regarding flight schedules, congestion during peak travel periods, and limited accessibility support for passengers with special needs have been highlighted in various passenger feedback platforms. Such challenges can negatively influence passengers' perceptions of airport services and reduce overall satisfaction levels (James Namukasa, 2013; Park, Robertson, & Wu, 2004).

Given the importance of customer service quality in shaping passenger experiences, this study seeks to examine customer perspectives on service improvement at Julius Nyerere International Airport. Specifically, the study aims to identify passengers' views on key service areas that require improvement in order to enhance satisfaction and foster long-term loyalty among airport users. Previous studies have shown that improvements in service quality dimensions such as reliability, responsiveness, and empathy significantly influence customer satisfaction and loyalty in aviation services (Valarie A. Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2018; Philip Kotler & Keller, 2016).

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on service quality in the aviation industry, particularly in the context of developing countries. In addition, the study provides practical insights that can assist airport management and aviation stakeholders in developing strategies aimed at improving customer service delivery and strengthening passenger satisfaction at the airport (Fodness & Murray, 2007; Wu & Chen, 2021).

## 2. Statement of the Problem

The aviation industry is highly service-oriented, and passenger satisfaction largely depends on the quality of services provided at airports. As global air travel continues to grow, airports face increasing pressure to improve service delivery in order to remain competitive and meet rising passenger expectations (Airports Council International, 2020). High-quality service provision enhances passenger satisfaction, encourages loyalty, and strengthens the reputation of airports within the global aviation network. Despite significant investments in airport infrastructure in Tanzania, customer service challenges continue to be reported by passengers. Issues such as baggage handling delays, limited communication during disruptions, and inconsistent customer care practices negatively influence passenger satisfaction (Masorgo et al., 2022; Mbise, 2022). Understanding passenger perspectives on service improvement is therefore essential for identifying gaps between expected and perceived service quality. By exploring the specific areas customers believe need improvement, the challenges they encounter at the airport, and the ways in which these service improvements may influence satisfaction and loyalty.

## 3. Literature Review

### 3.1 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the SERVQUAL model developed by A. Parasuraman, Valarie A. Zeithaml, and Leonard L. Berry (1988). The model identifies five dimensions of service quality; Tangibles – physical facilities and equipment, Reliability – ability to perform services dependably, Responsiveness – willingness to assist customers promptly, Assurance – knowledge and courtesy of employees, Empathy – individualized attention to customers. These dimensions provide a framework for evaluating passenger perceptions of service quality and identifying service gaps.

Airports worldwide have incorporated service quality management frameworks such as Airport Service Quality (ASQ) programs to improve operational efficiency and customer satisfaction. Research by Fodness and Murray (2007) underscores the importance of providing clear information, adequate signage, efficient check-in procedures, and comfortable waiting areas. Similarly, Correia et al. (2008) highlight that passengers' perceptions of airport quality are influenced by facility cleanliness, security processing, and access to services. When these service elements meet passenger expectations, customer satisfaction and loyalty are likely to increase.

### 3.2 Empirical Review

#### 3.2.1 Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty

Customer satisfaction in aviation is determined by the extent to which passenger expectations are fulfilled or exceeded (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Satisfied passengers are more likely to become loyal customers, demonstrate repeat patronage, and provide positive referrals. Numerous studies indicate that poor service delivery leads to dissatisfaction and can result in passengers switching airlines or avoiding specific airports (Archana & Subha, 2012). Loyalty is crucial in aviation because competition among airlines and hubs is growing, with passengers increasingly prioritizing convenience, comfort, and service experiences.

Customer loyalty is further strengthened when service improvements consistently address pain points identified by passengers (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). Thus, understanding customer views on service improvement provides actionable insights into how airports can tailor their services to promote satisfaction and loyalty.

Masorgo et al. (2022) investigated the connection between customer loyalty and service quality in Tanzania's aviation industry. The study found that increasing passenger loyalty requires both personnel competency and service operational efficiency. Improvements in service quality are linked to higher client retention rates.

#### 3.2.2 Customer Views as a Basis for Service Improvement

Customer perspectives play a significant role in improving service delivery within the aviation industry. Understanding passengers' experiences and expectations enables airport authorities and service providers to identify service gaps and implement appropriate improvement strategies. According to David Gilbert and Raymond Wong (2003), customer feedback is an important source of information that helps organizations identify weaknesses in service delivery and develop targeted initiatives aimed at

enhancing service quality. By incorporating customer opinions into service planning and evaluation, organizations are better positioned to provide services that meet or exceed customer expectations. Modern passengers also expect airports to provide digital information systems, consistent updates, and rapid assistance during disruptions (Williams & Brown, 2023). This suggests that service enhancement requires both technological upgrades and human-centered improvements.

Despite the extensive global research on airport service quality, relatively limited scholarly attention has been given to airports within the Tanzanian context. Existing studies on the Tanzanian aviation sector primarily focus on operational efficiency and employee competence, with limited emphasis on passengers' perspectives regarding service improvement. For instance, Masorgo et al. (2022) highlight the importance of service quality in influencing customer satisfaction within the aviation sector but provide limited empirical evidence regarding passenger experiences at specific airports.

Given this gap in the literature, the present study seeks to explore customer views on service improvement at Julius Nyerere International Airport. By examining passenger perceptions and experiences, the study aims to identify key service areas that require improvement in order to enhance customer satisfaction and strengthen passenger loyalty.

#### 4. Methodology

##### 4.1. Research Design

A mixed-methods approach was used, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of passengers' views. The approach enabled triangulation of numerical ratings from questionnaires and deeper insights from interviews. The objective's focus on customer views made qualitative data particularly valuable.

##### 4.2 Population and Sample Size

The population included international departure passengers and customer service providers. A sample of 83 departure passengers completed questionnaires, while 10 customer service staff (customer service officer) were interviewed. Passengers were selected using simple random sampling, while staff were selected purposively due to their direct involvement in service delivery.

##### 4.3. Data Collection Methods

Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from passengers, focusing on service quality perceptions and improvement needs. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with service staff to gain further insights on common customer concerns.

##### 4.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Themes were aligned with SERVQUAL dimensions and customer satisfaction indicators.

#### 5. Findings and Discussion

##### 5.1 Findings

The findings indicate that passengers generally appreciate the improvements made in airport infrastructure and service delivery. However, several service areas require further improvement.

##### 5.1.1 Customer Views on Service Improvement

The results presented in this section focus exclusively on Specific Objective No. 3. Passengers shared multiple views regarding areas where JNIA's services should be improved to enhance satisfaction and loyalty. Many passengers reported that communication during delays, gate changes, and operational issues was inadequate. Specifically, they mentioned: Late updates.

##### 5.1.2 Improvements Needed in Baggage Handling

Positive ratings (excellent and good) accounted for 54.3%, but 20.5% indicated poor or very poor experiences. A significant portion of passengers expressed concerns about baggage handling. Many reported delays in receiving luggage and inconsistent tracking processes. Others mentioned fear of damage or loss, highlighting the need for improved reliability. Passengers suggested: Faster baggage delivery times, more staff during busy periods and digital baggage tracking systems, these views reflect the importance of reliability in airport service delivery.

##### 5.1.3 Enhancing Complaint Resolution and Responsiveness

Passengers emphasized that the current complaint resolution system is slow and lacks transparency. While some staff were praised for their helpfulness, inconsistency in responsiveness was a recurring issue. Common recommendations included: Faster, more professional handling of complaints, dedicated help desk for urgent issues, Clear procedures and feedback systems. Responsiveness is a core SERVQUAL component; improving it directly influences satisfaction. This was among the weakest indicators. Although 41% rated it good and 12% excellent, 30.1% rated it average and 13.3% poor. The results suggest that passengers are dissatisfied with the airport's responsiveness to complaints. Ineffective complaint resolution undermines satisfaction, as noted by Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler (2018), who argue that responsiveness is a critical determinant of customer loyalty.

##### 5.1.4 Improving Security Screening Efficiency

Security screening was rated good by 38.6% and excellent by 21.7% of respondents, though 10.8% considered it poor. Given the centrality of security in aviation, inefficiencies in this area may create unnecessary anxiety for passengers. Although passengers acknowledged the importance of security measures, many noted frustrations with long queues and inconsistent screening

procedures. Factors contributing to dissatisfaction included limited staff at peak hours and insufficient communication during delays. Passengers proposed: More security counters, better queue management, friendly and informative staff communication. This indicates the need for both operational and interpersonal improvements

#### 5.1.5 *Enhancing Cleanliness and Hygiene Consistency*

Cleanliness is a crucial tangible factor. While many passengers rated cleanliness positively with 44.6% rating it good and 18.1% excellent, some pointed out challenges such as: Untidy restrooms during high-traffic periods, overfilled waste bins, inconsistent cleaning schedules. Passengers recommended routine, round-the-clock cleaning to maintain terminal hygiene.

#### 5.1.6 *Improving Airport Signage and Wayfinding*

A significant portion of passengers reported difficulties navigating the airport due to inadequate signage by rated good 39.8% and excellent by 19.3%, though 7.2% rated them poor and 3.6% very poor. While navigation is satisfactory for most Problems included: Signs placed too high or in obscure locations, Limited multilingual instructions, Insufficient digital guidance systems so passengers suggested: Larger, clearer signs Multilingual instructions (English, Swahili, French, Arabic), digital screens indicating directions, Improved signage enhances tangibility and reliability.

#### 5.1.7 *Addressing Accessibility Service Gaps*

Services for persons with disabilities, the elderly, and infants received positive ratings from 61.5%, with 18% reporting poor experiences. Passengers with disabilities, elderly travelers, and those with infants said accessibility services were insufficient. Issues included: Delayed wheelchair assistance, limited seating in waiting areas, inadequate staff attention. This gap suggests improvements in both infrastructure and staff capacity to ensure inclusive access.

#### 5.1.8 *Desire for Improved Customer Service Culture*

Passengers expressed the need for courteous, friendly, and helpful staff. Many appreciated positive interactions but desired greater uniformity in staff conduct. Suggested improvements included: Continuous staff training, customer service workshops, motivation and recognition programs, passengers believe staff behavior strongly affects satisfaction and loyalty.

## 5.2 Discussion

The results demonstrate that customer perspectives are essential in identifying service gaps and improving airport service delivery. Consistent with the SERVQUAL model, both tangible and intangible service factors influence passenger satisfaction.

### 5.2.1 *Link to SERVQUAL Dimensions*

Tangibles: Passengers stressed the need for better cleanliness and signage.

Reliability: Baggage handling delays and inconsistent processes undermine trust.

Responsiveness: Slow complaint resolution and inadequate assistance were major pain points.

Assurance: Passengers wanted more confident, knowledgeable staff.

Empathy: Special-needs passengers felt underserved, requiring more personalized care.

### 5.2.2 *Influence on Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty*

Customer satisfaction is influenced by the extent to which expectations are met (Kotler & Keller, 2016). When passengers perceive service gaps, dissatisfaction arises, which aligns with findings from Namukasa (2013). Poor baggage handling, inadequate communication, and limited accessibility services reduce perceived value (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). Conversely, service improvements increase satisfaction and loyalty. Passengers indicated that consistent improvements in key areas would influence their future airline and airport choices. This supports studies showing that airports with superior service quality achieve stronger customer loyalty (Liou & Tzeng, 2007).

### 5.2.3 *Implications for JNIA and the Aviation Sector*

Enhancing service quality helps retain passengers and enhances Tanzania's global image. Improved communication systems can reduce frustration during disruptions. Staff training leads to reliable and empathetic customer service connecting to technological upgrades such as digital signage and baggage tracking enhance efficiency. These implications support prior research advocating for service quality as a competitive advantage in aviation (Gursoy et al., 2005).

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 6.1 *Conclusion*

Passengers believe that improvements in baggage handling, signage, cleanliness, complaint resolution, accessibility services, and communication are essential for enhancing overall satisfaction and loyalty at JNIA. These views highlight specific service gaps within SERVQUAL dimensions, indicating that targeted interventions can significantly improve the airport experience. The study concludes that customer-driven improvements are central to strengthening service quality, satisfaction, and loyalty in Tanzania's aviation industry.

### 6.2 *Recommendations*

Enhance Baggage Handling Efficiency by introduce automated baggage tracking and increasing staffing at peak hours that will help the Strengthen Complaint Resolution Mechanisms by introducing digital feedback systems. Also to improve Communication

Systems by real time digital announcement and clear public address systems. Staff Training and Customer Service Culture Development by motivation programs for best performing like customer relations seminars Improve Airport Signage and Way finding through multilingual digital signage and clear user-friendly signs.

## References

- [1] Abdullah, D. (2005). The relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. *International Journal of Marketing Studies*, 7(3), 45–56.
- [2] Adeola, O., & Adebisi, S. (2021). Service encounters and passenger satisfaction. *Journal of African Business*, 22(4), 517–533.
- [3] Archana, R., & Subha, M. (2012). A study on service quality and passenger satisfaction on Indian airlines. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 11(1), 134–141.
- [4] Berry, L.L., Parasuraman, A., & Zeithaml, V.A. (1994). Improved service quality in America: Lessons learned”, *Academy of Management Executive*, Vol.8 No.2, pp.32-52.
- [5] Correia, A. R., Wirasinghe, S., & de Barros, A. (2008). Overall level of service measures for airport passenger terminals. *Transportation Research Part A*, 42(2), 330–346.
- [6] Correia, A., Wirasinghe, S., & Daskin, M. (2008). Airport passenger terminal design. *Transportation Research Record*, 2047(1), 10–20.
- [7] Chen, K.R. & Liu, Y.C. (2002), “The study of domestic airline service quality promotion”, *Journal of quality*, pp.44-54.
- [8] Chen, F., & Chang, Y. (2005). Examining airline service quality from a process perspective. *Journal of Air Transport Management*, 11(2), 79–87.
- [9] Chen, F. Y. (2008). Passenger expectations and airport services: A case study of Taiwanese airports. *Journal of Air Transport Management*, 14(1), 1–9.
- [10] Creswell, J.W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approach*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. SAGE publication.
- [11] Cronin, J. J., & Taylor, S. A. (1992). Measuring service quality: A re-examination and extension. *Journal of Marketing*, 56(3), 55–68.
- [12] Crosby, P.B. (1979). *Quality is Free*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- [13] Fodness, D., & Murray, B. (2007). Passengers’ expectations of airport service quality. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 21(7), 492–506.
- [14] Gilbert, D., & Wong, R. (2003). Passenger expectations and airline services. *Tourism Management*, 24(5), 519–532.
- [15] Gursoy, D., et al. (2005). Service quality in the airline industry. *Tourism Review*, 60(1), 16–27.
- [16] Isa, N. (2020). Key drivers of passenger’s overall satisfaction at klia2 terminal. *Journal of Air Transport. Management*, 87, Evsevier ltd.
- [17] Johnson, T., & Smith, R. (2022). The role of customer service and operational efficiency in enhancing passenger satisfaction. *International Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*. 19 (3), 154-169
- [18] Kombo D. K. and Tromp D. L (2014) *Proposal and thesis writing; An Introduction*, 14th Edition Paulines Publications Africa.
- [19] Kongoti, M (2015), “Service Quality Dimensions and Customer Satisfaction in the Kenyan Airline Industry”, School of Business, University of Nairobi.
- [20] Kothari C. R. (2014) *Research Methodology; methods and techniques*, New Age International (p) Limited.
- [21] Kotler, P., & Keller, K. (2016). *Marketing Management* (15th ed.). Pearson.
- [22] Liou, J., & Tzeng, G. (2007). A non-additive model for evaluating airline service quality. *Journal of Air Transport Management*, 13(4), 213–219.
- [23] Markovic, S., & Jankovic, S.R. (2013). Exploring the Relationship between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction in Croatian Hotel Industry.
- [24] Masorgo, S., et al. (2022). Service quality and customer loyalty in Tanzania’s aviation industry. *East African Journal of Business and Economics*, 2(1), 77–89.
- [25] Masorgo, N., S., & Rossiter Hofer, A. (2022). Expectations vs experience: Managing the adverse effects of service failure on customer satisfaction in the airline industry. *Transportation Journal*, 61(3), 321-262.
- [26] Mohammad, A.S., & Alhamadani, S.Y. (2001), *Service Quality Perspectives and Customer Satisfaction in Aviation industry*. Middle Eastern Finance and Economics.
- [27] Munusamy, J., Chelliah, S., & Mun, A. L. (2011). Service quality, service recovery and customer satisfaction in the airline industry. *Journal of Asian Social Science*, 7(7), 134–146.
- [28] Mbise, H. (2022). Aviation service quality challenges in Tanzania. *Tanzania Transport Journal*, 8(2), 43–57.
- [29] Mburu, O. (2019). Salient Attributes on the choice of an Airline service Provider: A case of domestic Airlines in Tanzania *Business Management Review*, 22(2), 135-154.
- [30] Namukasa, J (2013) “The influence of airline service quality on passenger satisfaction and loyalty: The case of Uganda airline industry”, *The TQM Journal*, Vol. 25 Iss:5, pp. 520- 532.
- [31] Ombati, T. (2012), “Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction at Kenya Airways Ltd”, School of Business, University of Nairobi.
- [32] Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A. and Berry, L.L. (1985). A conceptual Model of Service Quality and its implications for future research. *Journal of Marketing*, 49, 41-71.

- [33] Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V., & Berry, L. (1988). SERVQUAL: A multiple-item scale for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality. *Journal of Retailing*, 64(1), 12–40.
- [34] Park, J. W., Robertson, R., & Wu, C. L. (2004). The effect of airline service quality on passenger satisfaction. *Journal of Air Transport Management*, 10(6), 435–439.
- [35] Raditha H., Michael C., & David D (2015). “The Mediating Role of Perceived Value on the Relationship between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction; Evidence from Indonesian Airline Passenger.
- [36] Saha, G. C., & Theingi. (2009). Service quality, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions: A study of low-cost airline carriers in Thailand. *Managing Service Quality*, 19(3), 350–372.
- [37] Singh, R. (2023). Innovative baggage handling solutions to enhance passenger experience.
- [38] *Journal of Airport Management*, 18 (1), 18-31.
- [39] Sweeney, J. C., & Soutar, G. (2001). Consumer perceived value. *Journal of Retailing*, 77(2), 203–220.
- [40] Wang, L., & Zhou, J. (2021). Enhancing passenger satisfaction through quality food services in the airline industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 94, 102-112.
- [41] Williams, T., & Brown, C. (2023). Communication and information provision in airports; Effects on passenger satisfaction. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 40 (1),88- 104.
- [42] Wu, H. C., & Chen, Y.C. (2021). The impact of service quality on passenger satisfaction and loyalty in the airline industry. *Journal of Air Transport Management*, 94 (8), 102-105.
- [43] Zeithaml, V.A. (1988), “Consumer perceptions of price, quality, and value: a means -end model and synthesis of evidence”, *Journal of Marketing*, 52, pp.2-22.
- [44] Zeithaml, V. A., Bitner, M. J., & Gremler, D. D. (2006). *Services marketing: Integrating customer focus across the firm*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.