Check-in Services and Passengers' Impression of Airports in South-south Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria

Eze, Felix John[1]* and Inyang, Juliet John[1]

[1]*Department of Marketing, University of Calabar, P.M.B. 1115, Cross River State, Nigeria.*

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author E. F. John designed the study, managed the literature searches, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author I. J. John performed the statistical analysis and managed the analyses of the study. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Original Research Article

ABSTRACT

The study examined check-in service quality attributes and passengers' impression of airports in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The research was motivated by the desire to know how well passengers' impression of Nigerian airport service quality have been shaped by four check-in service attributes (competence of staff, politeness of staff, waiting time at check-in counters and interactions with passengers). The study used stratified random sampling to survey four hundred passengers at Port Harcourt International Airport and Margaret Ekpo International Airport. Data were collected using a five-point Likert scale questionnaire. The instrument was content-validated, while the Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the constructs gave reliability of 96.9 per cent. The data generated were analysed using mean rating and multiple linear regression analysis. The findings revealed that politeness of staff, waiting time at check-in counters and interactions with passengers significantly influenced passengers' impression of airports in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The study recommended that Airport management should regularly train frontline staff on customer service communication skills; provide feedback mechanisms such as voice recorders and CCTV cameras to check front-line interactions with passengers, and automate the check-in process as is obtainable in developed countries to reduce the waiting time at check-in counters. These will ensure and improve passengers' perception and patronage of aviation services in the zone, locally and internationally.

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*Corresponding author: E-mail: ezefelixjohn@gmail.com;

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The transportation system, especially air transportation is a major facet of commercial and economic growth of a country. Most investors and tourists enter the country through air transport services. The aviation sector as a major contributor to the Nigerian economy cannot be overlooked. Air transport internationally or domestically creates distinct economic benefits such as the increase in GDP, job creation, tax revenues to the government, and also generate income internally to the State; but the economic value created by the industry is more than that [1]. The primary benefits are created for the target audience, passengers or hauliers, who makes use of the services of airlines.

The Nigerian aviation sector no doubt consists of all the airports in Nigeria both local and international. According to Sydney Airport [2], some of the service point of airports in Nigeria and around the world include but is not limited to check-in services, airline services and lounges, aviation security, baggage services, loss tracing services, convenience, cafeteria or restaurants, transportation within, emergency medical services, isolation services in case of detection of contagious infections, money exchange services, telecommunications services and visitor assistance. With regards to these services highlighted, the Federal Airport Authority of Nigeria [3] Service Charter of 2009 promised to do away with problems of unethical practices and incompetence in the aviation sector by operating in such a way that customers can expect quality service delivery; demand their rights to good service; have recourse when service delivery fails and actively be involved in the service delivery programme. The pledge of the Federal Airport Authority of Nigeria [3] Service Charter of 2009 highlights the need for service quality at airports. This includes the quality of check-in services. Check-in services are those activities or processes associated with the admittance of passengers into their selected flights. The quality of airport check-in services creates an impression among passengers which can be either positive or negative. Hence, the impression of passengers towards such airport services cannot be overemphasized as they expect core benefits, solution and satisfaction.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Air travellers have expressed displeasure towards certain services at various Nigerian airports. One service for which displeasure has been expressed is the check-in service [4]. Poor and unprofessional airport check-in services have made passengers develop a negative impression of airport service quality in Nigeria. Besides the high airfares and flight delays, the unprofessional disposition of check-in officials has led to complaints and is a source of worry to air travellers. Passengers have complained about the rudeness of some of the staff. Despite the training they receive, some check-in personnel display incompetence and poor communication skills when attending to passengers. Additionally, the length of time spent at check-in counters further reveals the unprofessional attitude of the check-in personnel. Painfully, instead of this personnel working toward improving their efficiency, to meet up with international best practices, their attitudes have deteriorated, exacerbated by their penchant for gratifications and tips before attending to would-be travellers. To this end, this study examines the effect of check-in service quality on passengers' impression of airport service quality in Nigeria.

The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Examine the effect of competence of check-in personnel on passengers' impression of airports in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria,
2. Ascertain the effect of politeness of check-in staff on passengers' impression of airports in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria,
3. Examine the effect of waiting time at check-in counters on passengers' impression of airports in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria,
4. Determine the extent to which interactions with airport personnel affect passengers' impression of airports in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria,

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The study is based on the Expectancy Disconfirmation Paradigm (EDP) theorized by

Oliver [5]. It came from works that were carried out on customers' satisfaction [6]. The EDP theory opined that consumer's perception of satisfaction comes from comparing their expectation with the outcome/performance. Thus satisfaction can be measured by two variables-expectation and outcome performance. Based on the expectancy disconfirmation paradigm, satisfaction can be increased by enhancing the perception of the product or service performance or by reducing expectation. The expectancy disconfirmation paradigm infers that customers buy products with prepurchase expectations about expected outcomes. The product is thereby judged based on the expected outcome. That is, once the product or service has been used, outcomes are compared against expectations. Confirmation is said to occur when the outcome, that is the satisfaction derived from the product or service equals the expectation. However, a difference between expectations and outcomes results in disconfirmation. Customers' satisfaction or dissonance is an outcome of a positive or negative difference between expectations and perceptions [7].

This theory is relevant to the study of service quality of the airport. As implied in the expectancy disconfirmation theory, customers have a certain expectation of the quality of services they expect to derive when they visit the airports. The perceived performance of the quality of services received may indeed rise or decline directly with their expectations, hence, perceived service quality may either confirm or disconfirm the passengers' expectation of the airport service quality. Therefore, the passengers' perception (or judgment) of airport check-in services quality comes from comparing the expectation and actual performance of the airport check-in services.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

2.2.1 History of aviation in Nigeria

Nigerian civil aviation has its beginning from the era of British colonization. Its inception can be traced to Kano in July 1925 during an incident that created tension between the British colonialists and the residents. On sensing the trouble in Kano, London promptly instructed the commanding officer of the Khartoum RAF Squadron to fly to Kano and deal with the circumstances. The officer made his way to Kano flying a Bristol fighter and made a spectacular and incident-free landing on the horse racecourse in Kano, thereby marking the beginning of air travel activities in Nigeria [8].

"The earliest known commercial aviation activity in Nigeria is credited to Bud Carpenter, who owned the earliest type of the Light aircraft, de Havilland Moth. Records show that he frequently undertook high-risk flights between Kano and Lagos, using the rail tracks as his guide and piling up the extra distance in the process. In the early 1930s, an enterprising pilot carried a few fare-paying passengers in a sea-plane between Lagos and Warri. With the continuation of the annual RPLF flights, aviation activities in Nigeria became quite considerable, creating the need for aerodromes. Consequently, a representative of the Air Ministry in London visited Nigeria to inspect what could then be appropriately described as landing grounds. Sites were selected at Maiduguri, Oshogbo, Lagos, Minna, Kano and Kaduna" [9].

Between 1935 and 1936, air traffic operations carried out by RAF were substituted by the Imperial Airways flying mails and passengers from London to Nigeria and other routes such as Cairo to Uganda and Khartoum to Nigeria. With the rise in aviation activity, more landing fields were needed. Initially, 24 more landing fields were planned to link the entire country; two were to be constructed yearly. But these landing fields were all completed before the outburst of the Second World War in 1940. When the war ended in 1945 civil aviation regained its prime place in Nigeria with the services of both the BOAC (via the West Coast), and the old Imperial Airways (via the Nile and Khartoum). They also introduced a range of aircraft such as Dove, DC-3, Tudor; Skymaster, York and later Comet and Britannia. BOAC's services were to be extended to the whole of the West African colonies [8].

As further narrated by FAAN [8], "the King of England established the West African Air Transport Authority (WAATA) on May 1946. WAATA consisted of the governors of Nigeria, Gold Coast (Ghana), Sierra Leone and the Gambia, with the governor of Nigeria as the President. The court edict that established WAATA also authorised the establishment of the West African Airways Corporation (WAAC). The Transport Authority was to supervise the WAAC as well as all other aviation matters in the region. WAAC was charged to develop air services in and between West African territories. The control and administration of Civil Aviation were vested in the Directorates of Public Works of these countries who applied for United Kingdom

Colonial Air Navigator orders as their legislative authority. In August 1958 the Nigerian government in partnership with BOAC and Elder Dempster lines formed the West African Airways Corporation (Nigeria) limited which later became Nigeria Airways". This distinct momentous move foreshadowed the dawn of the airline industry in Nigeria.

2.2.2 Understanding the concept of airport service quality

Service quality can be referred to as an individual evaluation of the service attributes [10] rightly acknowledged that the quality of services offered differentiates successful organizations from unsuccessful ones. Business owners and executives have the responsibility of ensuring that they offer high-quality service. There is a consensus that service quality is vital, however, many organizations find it difficult to effectively measure and grasp the concept of service quality. However, service quality has been measured in two broad dimensions or model-Service Quality (SERVQUAL) and Service Performance (SERVPERF). SERVQUAL holds that service quality is measured through the comparison of expectations with performance or service experience. On the other hand, SERVPERF dimension holds that service quality is measured simply by the performance of individual service attributes. This implies that airport service quality depends on the extent to which the service offered fulfils requirements of airport customers, instead of comparison between expectations and performance [11]. This study adopts the Service performance dimension of service quality.

There is various perspective to the study of airport service quality. While some scholars examine airport service quality by analysing expectations and experience of the passengers, others apply several techniques of airport performance assessment. However, some authors study and assess the quality of services offered at the airport using the SERVQUAL dimensions. For instance, Chou, Liu, Huang, Yih, and Han, [12] and Erdil and Yildiz, [13] used the five SERVQUAL dimensions (tangibles, assurance, responsiveness, empathy and reliability) to establish a benchmark for the assessment of airport service quality.

On the other hand, Pabedinskaitė and Akstinaitė, [14] simply used several technical airport features to examine the operational efficiency of the airport. The technical characteristics were the availability of runways, size of the airport, number of workers, number of aircraft stands (platforms), number of trips, size of cargo, number of travellers among others. However, Seyanont [15] emphasized that airport service quality should be measured in terms of the following concerns of passengers towards services offered, accessibility of airport, interface between the airlines and the airport, mobility within the airport, car parks, dining and stores and condition of the waiting lounges. He backed his claims by mentioning that these factors affect passengers' perception of airport service quality.

The Airport Cooperative Research Program [16] found that airport service quality should be measured by ease of movement through the airport; brilliant collection of retail enterprises; neatness and environment of the airport terminal, halls, and boarding gates; outstanding service delivery and politeness of airport personnel; and encouraging passengers' experience at boarding gates or check-in points. The quality of these services can be determined both quantitatively and qualitatively.

2.2.3 The concept of passengers' impression

Merriam-Webster Dictionary [17] defines impression as the effect or influence that something or someone has on a person's thoughts or feelings. The word 'impression' connotes perception and is sometimes used interchangeably. According to Eze and Ozo [18], the perception has to do with how we see the world around us. Achumba [19] defines it as the process of selecting, organizing and interpreting stimulus received through the five physical senses of vision, touch, smell and taste. He also stated that perception begins when one is confronted with a stimulus or a situation. Mogaba [20] expatiates further by stating that in marketing setting, impression or perception means value attached to communications about products received or services experienced.

It is beneficial to study impression or perception. This is because only by studying the way we perceive, can we recognize our own mistakes and imperfections and eventually eliminate them from our cognition. This can be applied at the perception level as well as at the level of ideas and constructs which are derived from perceptions [21]. Schiffman, O'Cass, Paladino and Carlson [22] noted that there are three aspects of perception-selection, organization and

interpretation of stimuli. First, individuals select stimuli which they identify (selection); next, the selected stimuli are subconsciously categorized according to commonly believed principles of psychology (organization of stimuli), finally, explanations are given to the stimuli according to their needs, expectations and experiences (interpretation of stimuli).

2.2.4 Airport check-in services

The first and mandatory point of call for every passenger visiting the airport is the check-in counter. This process usually takes place before the flight departure. The check-in processes at the airport are oftentimes characterised by several activities such as certification of travel papers, admission of passenger baggage/ belongings and issuing of boarding passes. This stage is usually considered extensive and strenuous by air travellers. [23] Four major service areas of check-in services which customers lookout for include waiting time, extra luggage cost, courteousness, helpfulness, and efficiency of the staff at the check-in desk.

2.3 Empirical Review

There have been studies on customers' perception and service quality in the aviation industry which would be relevant to review. Oghojafor and Adekoya [24] studied the determining factor of passengers' satisfaction in the air travel industry with specific emphasis on airline services. The study surveyed a convenience sample of one hundred passengers at the Murtala Mohammed Airport 2 in Lagos, Nigeria. It also employed the snowballing methods. Data obtained were analysed using Analytical hierarchy process model (AHP). The result showed that passengers are satisfied when their needs are responded to in record time especially the timely provision of flight information. The study also noted that courtesy of personnel during ticket purchase, booking and check-in critically affects air travellers' satisfaction. The study recommended that further research be carried out in geo-political zones using a larger sample.

Another study by Ojo [4] revealed that passengers' perception of service delivery at Murtala Muhammed International Airport was not very encouraging. This conclusion was drawn from the survey of two hundred and thirty-four (234) passengers at the airport. The data were analyzed using simple percentages and frequencies. The findings showed that the International Wing of Murtala Muhammed Airport is yet to offer its full potential despite being dubbed as the hub of the aviation industry in Nigeria and West Africa. Though huge federal allocation is pumped into the airport, it is still performing below expectation. The study further made recommendations for certain service areas of the airport which included ground access, flight services, airport facilities, fire and rescue services, airport security, airport personnel and landscape.

A study by the Airport Cooperative Research Program [16] involving nine airports in America revealed customer service efficiency is measured based on an updated understanding of what passengers' desire to experience at the airport. The survey made use of descriptive statistics such as the bar chart to analyze data obtained. The study showed that passengers rated the following factors as most important-waiting for time, neatness, staff politeness, experience at boarding gates and shops with product assortments. Nonetheless, passengers may have negative airport experience even when unforeseen occurrences happen. These occurrences include flight cancellations, flight delays, inadequate parking space and gridlock on the way to the airport.

Widarsyah, [10] examined the effect of key service dimensions of airports and overall passenger perceptions of service quality. The dimensions studied were conditions of facilities, personnel and security interactions, shopping and dining experience, airport access, immigration and customs and airport aesthetics. Using online self-administered questionnaire copies, the work surveyed a convenience sample of three hundred and four passengers of four major international airports in the West Coast region of United States (Las Vegas McCarran International, Los Angeles International, San Francisco International, and Seattle-Tacoma International). Multiple linear regression was adopted to analyse the data gathered. The study revealed that four service dimensions were significantly related to passengers' overall perception of airport service quality. They are airport access, aesthetics, dining experience, and immigration. The study further revealed that the airport environment or aesthetics had the highest effect on air travellers' perception of service quality. This is followed closely by airport access, dining experience, immigration interactions and efficiency of customs service.

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Teikake [25] in his work showed that passengers were not satisfied with service delivery at Kiribati airports. The level of dissatisfaction was centred on the rating of the quality of 15 airport service attributes (some of which include availability and airport accessibility, cosiness and neatness of airport terminals, staff friendliness and baggage delivery time). The study discovered that there were differences in satisfaction between the 4 islands under study. The study also showed that passengers' satisfaction varied along with gender and age of travellers. These conclusions were drawn from the results of the descriptive statistics analysis (mean, median and standard deviation) and the non-parametric test (such as Wilcoxon signed-rank test and Kruskal-Wallis test) used in the study. The study recommended training of frontline personnel, imbibing a customers' orientation culture in the organization and provision of resources by the Ministry of Transport to improve service delivery at airports.

In 2009, carried out by J.D. Power and associates surveyed twenty-four thousand passengers at North America Airports. As a result of the survey, airports were ranked based on airport access, luggage claim, check-in procedures, condition of airport facilities, security and retail services. During the survey, passengers were asked probing questions such as the length of time it took to obtain their baggage. Using a sequence of categorized

regressions analysis, the research analysts aggregated each response from the 81 airports surveyed and created an index model that weighed the significance of the service quality attributes examined.

2.4 Conceptual Model of Airport Services Quality and Passengers' Impression

The conceptual model which shows the effect of airport check-in service quality attributes on passengers' impression is represented in Fig. 1. The model expresses the following null hypotheses:

1. Competence of check-in staff has no significant effect on passengers' impression of airports in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.
2. Check-in staff politeness does not significantly affect passengers' impression of airports in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.
3. There is no significant effect of waiting time at check-in counters on passengers' impression of airports in South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.
4. Interactions with airport personnel have no significant effect on passengers' impression of airports in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.
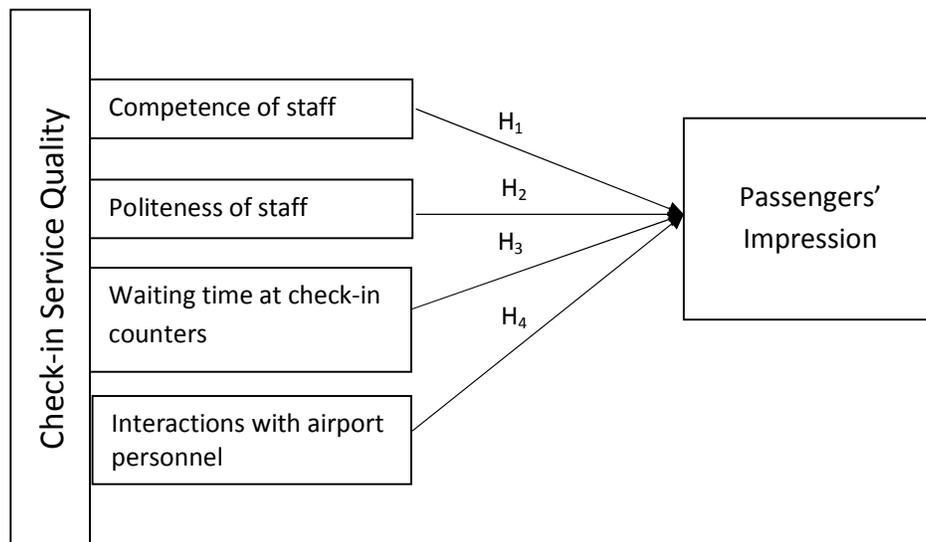
Fig. 1. Conceptual model of the relationship between airport check-in services quality and passengers' impression
Source: Authors' model modified from Widarsyah R. [10]. The impact of airport service quality dimension on overall airport experience and impression. Las Vegas: University of Nevada

3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. The population was limited to passengers of two FAAN operated airports in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria (Margaret Ekpo International Airport and Port Harcourt International Airport). According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2016), the total number of passengers to travel through these two airports is 1,413,714. Since this population is known, the Taro Yamane formula was used to arrive at a sample of 400 respondents using an error margin of 5% (0.05). The study employed stratified random sampling technique in selecting passengers at the airports waiting/departure lounges. The data for the execution of this study were mainly obtained from the primary source. The primary data were gotten from the respondents through the deployment of a structured questionnaire consisting of the five-point Likert scale. Content-validation was used for the instrument validity, while Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to confirm the reliability after carrying out a pilot survey on 40 airport passengers. The Cronbach's alpha score for the four constructs was 0.699. Data analysis techniques employed was the multiple linear regression and mean rating. This analysis was computed electronically with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Science version 23.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Out of the 400 questionnaires distributed, 369 were completed and returned, while 31 questionnaires were not returned. This gave a high response rate of 92.25 per cent. Descriptive statistics show that passengers' rated the airport check-in services attributes well above average for the items (Table 1).

Statement 1 in Table 1 shows that 2 (0.5%) respondents rated the competence of check-in staff as poor, 56 (15.2%) respondents rated it as fair, 121 (32.8%) of the respondents rated it as average, 80 (21.7%) respondents rated it as good, 59 (16.0%) respondents rated it as excellent and 51 (13.8%) respondents were uncertain on this service attribute. The responses gave an average (mean) rating of 3.4 out of the 5-point scale. This shows that the majority of airport passengers had a positive perception of the competence of check-in staff at the airport.

Statement 2 in Table 1 shows that 3 (0.8%) respondent rated the politeness of check-in staff as poor, 152 (41.2%) respondents rated it as fair,

70 (19.0%) of the respondents rated it as average, 29 (7.9%) respondents rated it as good, 64 (17.3%) respondents rated it as excellent, and 51 (13.8%) respondents were uncertain on this service attribute. The responses gave an average (mean) rating of 3.0 out of the 5-point scale. This shows that the majority of airport passengers had a positive perception of check-in staff politeness.

Statement 3 in Table 1 shows that 10 (2.7%) respondents rated the waiting/processing time at check-in counters as poor, 58 (15.7%) respondents rated it as fair, 121 (32.8%) of the respondents rated it as average, 75 (20.3%) respondents rated it as good, 54 (14.6%) respondents rated it as excellent, and 51 (13.8%) respondents were uncertain on this service attribute. The responses gave an average (mean) rating of 3.3 out of the 5-point scale. This shows that the majority of airport passengers had a positive perception of waiting/processing time at the airports' check-in counters.

Statement 4 in Table 1 shows that 4 (1.1%) respondents rated interactions with airport personnel as poor, 6 (1.6%) respondents rated it as fair, 129 (35.0%) of the respondents rated it as average, 117 (31.7%) respondents rated it as good, 58 (15.7%) respondents rated it as excellent, and 55 (14.9%) respondents were uncertain on this service attribute. The responses gave an average (mean) rating of 3.7 out of the 5-point scale. This shows that the majority of airport passengers had a positive perception of their interactions with airport personnel.

4.1 Test of Hypotheses

To test for the hypotheses, the four check-in services attributes were regressed against passengers' impression of airports in South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. The result shows a significant positive relationship (R=56.5%; R^2 = 31.9%; F= 42.644; p = 0.000). The value of R^2 indicates that only 31.9% of the variation in passengers' overall impression is accounted for by the change in check-in services. The high association between check-in services and passengers' impression indicates that the regression model significantly predicts the outcome variable, and is a good fit for the data.

Table 4 is the coefficients table, which provides the necessary information to predict passengers' impression from check-in services, as well as determine the aspects of check-in services that

contribute statistically significantly to the model. Although the regression model generally reveals a statistical significance, Table 4 shows that not all aspect of check-in services significantly affect passengers' impression of airports in the South-South geo-political zone; from the table it can be seen that politeness of check-in staff (p = 0.000), waiting/processing time at check-in counters (p = 0.003) and interactions with airport personnel (p = 0.000), significantly affect passengers' overall impression since they all have probability value less than 0.05. On the other hand, the competence of check-in staff (p = 0.877) does not significantly affect passengers' overall impression as its p-value is greater than 0.05. Additionally, from the beta column it is seen that politeness of check-in staff made the strongest unique contribution to explaining the dependent variable (Beta = 1.109), followed by interactions with airport personnel (Beta = 0.633) and then waiting/processing time at check-in counters (Beta = 0.453), while competence of check-in staff made the least and most insignificant contribution in explaining the dependent variable (Beta = 0.027). Therefore, the first null hypothesis was accepted. On the other hand, the results show that politeness of check-in staff, waiting time and security interactions significantly affect passengers' impression of airports in South South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

The result of the hypotheses tests showed that check-in services had a significant positive effect on passengers' impression of airports in South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. The result further showed that only three aspects of check-in services significantly affected passengers' impression of the airports. They include politeness of check-in staff, waiting time at check-in counters and interaction with check-in personnel. A closer look at the mean rating for check-in services at both airports revealed that among the significant check-in services, politeness of check-in staff had the least score (3.0) which was fairly positive. On the other hand, interaction with check-in personnel was positive as seen from the mean score of 3.7. Meanwhile, no check-in service area was rated as very positive. This implies that there is a need

Table 1. Evaluation of airport check-in service quality

S/N	Statements	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent	Uncertain	Mean rating
1.	Competence of check-in staff	2 (0.5%)	56 (15.2%)	121 (32.8%)	80 (21.7%)	59 (16.0%)	51 (13.8%)	3.4
2.	Politeness of check-in staff	3 (0.8%)	152 (41.2%)	70 (19.0%)	29 (7.9%)	64 (17.3%)	51 (13.8%)	3.0
3.	Waiting/processing time at check-in counters	10 (2.7%)	58 (15.7%)	121 (32.8%)	75 (20.3%)	54 (14.6%)	51 (13.8%)	3.3
4.	Interactions with airport personnel	4 (1.1%)	6 (1.6%)	129 (35.0%)	117 (31.7%)	58 (15.7%)	55 (14.9%)	3.7

Source: Field survey, 2018

Table 2. Model summary of the effect of check-in services on passengers' impression

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. the error of the estimate
1	.565[a]	.319	.312	.709

a. Predictors: (Constant), Security interactions, Check-in politeness, Waiting time, Check-in competence

Table 3. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) result on the effect of check-in services on passengers' impression

Model		Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	85.841	4	21.460	42.644	.000[b]
	Residual	183.183	364	.503		
	Total	269.024	368			

a. Dependent Variable: Overall Impression
b. Predictors: (Constant), Security interactions, Check-in politeness, Waiting time, Check-in competence

Table 4. Coefficients of the effect of check-in services on passengers' impression

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	2.873	.086		33.314	.000
Check-in competence	.016	.101	.027	.154	.877
Check-in politeness	.626	.063	1.109	9.886	.000
Waiting time	.256	.087	.453	2.949	.003
Security interactions	.355	.052	.633	6.784	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Overall Impression

for improvement in check-in services of the airports. This finding is in agreement with that of Oghojafor and Adekoya [24] which showed that customers of the aviation industry were pleased when check-in staff operators responded quickly to their requests and politely provide information about their flights.

5. CONCLUSION

The study examined the effect of check-in service quality on passengers' impression of airports in South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. Understanding specific airport check-in service quality attributes and how they impact on passengers' impression of airports is a necessary step towards improving airport service quality. This study considered four check-in service attributes- politeness of check-in staff, interactions with passengers, the competence of staff and waiting time at check-in counters. Interestingly, the research results have shown that these attributes studied shape the impression of passengers at an airport in South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. By implication, the study has shown the need for airport managers to prioritize customers' satisfaction at airports by measuring their impression of service performance using these services attributes as yardsticks. This is because improving passengers' experience at the airports can generate revenue for the airports and encourage more patronage of aviation services in the zone, locally and internationally.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the result of this research, the following recommendations are proffered:

i.   To improve airport check-in services, the Servicom department of the airport should train the frontline staff regularly on customer service communication skills. This will go a long way to facilitate effective customer service and smoothen the

relationship between the airport and its stakeholders.

ii. Additionally, airport management should provide feedback mechanisms such as voice recorders and CCTV cameras to check front-line interactions with passengers.

iii. Finally, airport management should automate the check-in process as is obtainable in developed countries to reduce the waiting time at check-in counters.

iv. Aviation policymakers should endeavour to formulate policies aimed at discouraging poor check-in services at the airport. In the condition of service for airport staff, it should be clearly stated that there would be penalties against airport staff who defaults the check-in rules or codes.

v.   In the course of this research, it was observed that the staff requested for monetary tips and provided quality services to those who tipped them. To this end, it is recommended that researchers further examine the relationship between the remuneration of airport check-in staff and their service delivery.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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