

Research Article

The Implication of Bus Operators' Dissatisfaction in Using Public Bus Terminals: A Case of Magufuli Bus Terminal, Dar es Salaam

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Abstract

Bus terminals are usually built by the authorities to improve access to the means of transportation and integration between bus operators, commuter buses and other modes of transport available. However, due to certain weaknesses, bus operators and passengers are normally not satisfied with the services offered by the terminals. This paper examines sources of dissatisfaction and their implications on the bus terminal service. It is based on data collected from the Magufuli bus terminal in Dar es Salaam city in Tanzania by using observation, interview and focus group discussion. The findings indicate that bus operators and passengers are dissatisfied with the services offered by terminals due to ten setbacks. These include absence of direct connectivity with other modes of transport, a lack of access for special groups, poor accessibility for private transport, limited space for storage of facilities, single transfer of commuter buses, absence of parking spaces, differences in the fare paid to similar destinations, integration between bus operators and commuter buses, and presence of bus operators who do not conform to the agreed principles of handling public transport. As an attempt to get rid of these setbacks and offer better services, the bus operators established their own bus stations on city streets. These privately owned bus stations offer a relatively better transport service compared to those offered in the public bus terminal. Thus, as they are satisfied with the service, passengers abandon the public terminals and use the private bus stations. The public bus terminal management should therefore expand their services, establish supporting terminals in different streets of the cities, adopt alternative technology, attract ride-sharing partnerships, and focus on maintaining quality services to ensure transport accessibility and integration with bus operators, commuters, and other modes of transport.

Keywords

Bus Operator, Bus Station, Bus Terminal, Alternative Technology, Modes of Transport

1. Introduction

A bus terminal defined as a facility for the alighting and boarding of passengers from several bus lines for interconnection or transfer to other modes of transport appears to

contribute significantly to transport development worldwide. [8] states that a public bus terminal acts as a pivot in making the transport services accessible, efficient and convenient in

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communities. Thus, as it becomes a point where bus routes start or end and a place where vehicles stop, turn, or reverse to wait for passengers before departing on their return journeys its success inevitably guarantees development in the transport sector. However, if there is a single central bus terminal located at one point that is not accessible; and does not allow integration to bus operators interchanging of commuter buses and other available modes of transport between routes becomes problematic. Similarly, if there are many movements of buses, a single bus terminal can become impractical, creating congestion both within the stations themselves and on the surrounding streets. In this regard, [3] upholds that an ideal bus terminal should have large space. Usually, in large cities, there are several bus terminals located around the sidelines of the central areas serving different routes or destinations. Ideally, when each of these bus terminals is located close to the corridors served by its groups of routes, it becomes easy to minimize the number of buses that cross the central areas and reduce the traffic congestion caused by the coming buses; thus, leading to satisfaction among bus operators and passengers.

In a public bus station or coach station, buses should be organised into specific parking slots. These parking slots act as stands where the bus queue while waiting passengers and the time to depart. [2], this system is expected to be practised in large bus terminals in cities. A bus stand remains a designated parking location where a bus or a coach waits out of service between scheduled public transport service and passengers waiting for their respective arriving buses. That way, the bus stand will act as an alternative name for bus stops inside a bus terminal, as [10] argues that depending on the type, a terminal should have specific infrastructural elements and equipment. As well, it has to be located on either the end of the lines (track) of the vehicle motion particularly on modal network marking something that has length or an end in terms of a traffic route. This statement means that bus stands are built not only to allow buses to lay over at stations without giving the appearance of being in service, or blocking the stop from use by other buses which are in service, but also to allow short-term parking for the drivers' changes or breaks. For that reason, we can say that a turnout type of bus stop is extended and buses can lay over away from the stop when necessary. In the locations where buses cannot remain stationary for long nearby, separate bus stands may be provided where other bus parking is not conveniently located. Accordingly, [8] confirms that due to their public use, bus stands will often be specifically covered by local regulation. For instance, for pollution and fuel-saving concerns drivers may switch off their engines if the buses are in stand as opposed to when it is stopped at a bus stop. At the appropriate time, the bus can be moved to short distance from the stop and get bordered.

An effective bus terminal is known to bus operators and passengers for certain qualities. According to, [3, 10] people will be satisfied with a bus stand if it has access for them to basic needs including customer care, free and clean wash-

rooms, easy way of getting in and out of the bus with their belongings without being disturbed by brokers moving to the bus stand or from the bus stand to their destinations. It should simplify ways to buy tickets; help passengers to get tickets to buses of their choice, and prevent brokers from choosing buses for passengers [2]. However, this shows that if a bus terminal in a certain city lacks one of these qualities, bus operators will unavoidably not be satisfied with it. Hence, they may look for alternative ways to operate their business.

2. Literature Review

A bus terminal is one of the crucial means of sustainable and safe transportation, catering to the needs of bus operators and passengers worldwide. However, due to certain reasons bus operators may be dissatisfied with the services offered by bus terminals and poor integration with other modes of transport. In the United States, the intercity bus industry has undergone notable transformations influenced by market dynamics and regulatory changes to respond to complaints from bus operators and passengers. [1] reports that as bus operators and passengers were dissatisfied with services offered, initiatives such as the introduction of express bus services and expansion of routes were taken to enhance accessibility of the bus terminals and make passengers satisfied. In France, the complaints of poor services offered by bus terminals contributed to deregulation of the intercity sector so as to meet the demands of bus operators and passengers. [2] states that the review and deregulation were a result of the growing competition among operators, which led to liberalization of the market, expansion of services offered and improvement of the services' quality; contributing to a rise in the customer satisfaction. While the challenges reported to hinder the services offered by bus terminals in these cities seem resemble, we can identify certain differences in the way each of the challenges can be set away. For instance, whereas introduction of express bus service and expansion of routes in bus terminals have been applied to reduce the intercity transport challenges in the United States, liberalization of transport services and expansion of the service offered by bus terminals have been helped to reduce similar challenges in France. This entails that if transport managers keep on evaluating of their day-to-day service, especially services related to bus terminals, communities can enjoy sustained and better services. Moreover, in Germany and across Europe, intercity bus travel is reported to have gained popularity due to its affordability and convenience with operators such as FlixBus dominating the market [3].

In South Africa, bus operators experience challenges related to lack of integration between large bus projects and the public bus system, tax intimidation, wage negotiation, and economic constraints including high fuel prices decline in the use of commuters in the bus industry. [11] reports that recent projects such as the Gautrain and Rapid-bus-Transit are still referred to as stand-alone efforts because they are not inte-

grated into the broader public system. It is upheld that striving for affordability and political will to drive the change of alternative technologies can help improve and reduce the challenges. Moreover, [5] assert that aspects such as lowering of costs by managing expenses with strict budget and monitoring, focusing on quality instead of quantity and regularly patronising young and upcoming operators can help to resolve the challenges faced by bus operators.

In the East African communities, the bus industry serves as a vital mode of transportation, connecting urban centre with rural areas and vice versa and the neighbouring countries. Thus, the industry facilitates economic activities and social interactions within and across the member countries. However, the quality of service provided by bus terminals has been one of the debatable topics among bus operators and passengers. In cities of Kenya, [4] identifies inadequate space, high operational costs, and inefficient regulatory frameworks as the major challenges compromising the quality of services offered in bus terminals. This paper focuses on the sources of bus operators' dissatisfactions with services offered by the public bus terminals.

3. Theoretical Foundation and Methodology

This section offers information regarding the theory and the methodology that guided the process of collecting and analysing the data.

3.1. Theoretical Foundation

Data collection and analysis in this study were guided by the Transport System Theory of Rodrque (2020). This theory emphasizes the interdependence of transport infrastructure, transport stakeholders and regulatory frameworks. The theory highlights the need to balance the interests of the government authorities, bus operators and passengers. Besides, as this theory is grounded in the service Quality model, it evaluates the quality of service based on five dimensions namely reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangible. In this study, the theory enabled us to do systematic assessment of the quality of the services offered by the Magufuli bus terminal based on the perspective of bus operators. This model has been applied in studies related to assessment of transport services; hence, offering a structured approach to identifying gaps between expected services and the actual delivered services.

3.2. Methodology

This paper was conducted in Magufuli Bus Terminal in

Ubungo municipal located in Dar es Salaam city. The data were collected through observation, focus group discussion and interview.

3.2.1. Observation

Observation enabled us to detect availability of enough space, connectivity with other means of transport, location of booking offices, one-way tickets, parcel storage, the space for parking private cars, and the distance between the bus terminal and Mbezi Luis where min buses usually park to take passengers.

3.2.2. Interview

Interview were conducted with bus operators at different stations located at Urafiki in Ubungo Municipality to discern information related to travelling costs, congestion, and disturbances of transfer between one commuter bus to another. Usually, passengers prefer fewer transfers to many transfers. For instance, a person travelling from Kigamboni would like to have less than two transfers. Model formulation and analysis were used in this section. Therefore, in formulating this model, we had the following assumptions:

- 1) The distance from home to the Magufuli bus terminal is 30 km
- 2) There is no road traffic on the way to the Magufuli terminal
- 3) The normal time spent on the way to the Magufuli terminal is one hour, including the time for traffic lights and the time wasted for passengers to get on and out without transfer.

In this regard, passenger require a minimum distance as illustrated in equations 1 and 2

$$\text{Min } d_w^{h \rightarrow s} \quad (1)$$

$$\text{Min } t_{wn}^{h \rightarrow s} \quad (2)$$

where $d_w^{h \rightarrow s}$ represents the walking distance from home to stop and $t_{wn}^{h \rightarrow s}$ is for walking time necessary to get home from the stop. Furthermore, transport time is a very important for passenger satisfaction; that is, passengers require a minimum time as indicated in equation 3.

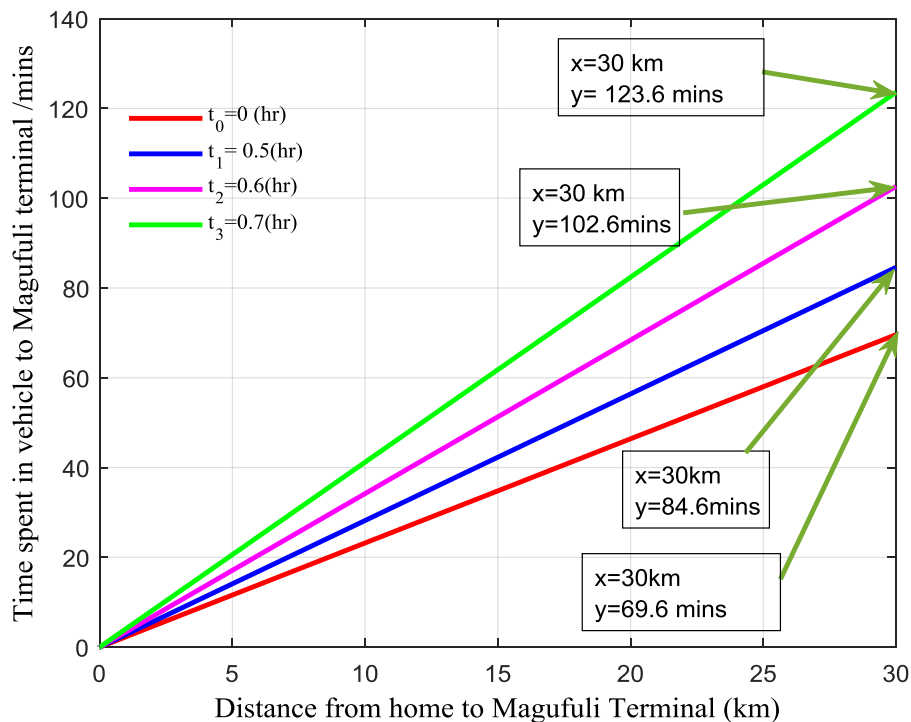
$$\text{Min } t_p^{d \rightarrow d} = t_w^{h \rightarrow dep} + t_{wdep} + t_v^{de \rightarrow dest} + \sum_{i=1}^n t_i^{TR} + t_w^{ml \rightarrow mt} \quad (3)$$

Where numbers of transfer n is 0, 1, 2 and 3

Table 1. Parameter Description and Estimated Values.

Parameters	Parameter description	Parameter estimated /hr
$t_w^{h \rightarrow dep}$	walking time from household to the min bus departure	0.3
t_{wdep}	waiting time at the min bus departure	0.55
$t_v^{de \rightarrow dest}$	time spent in the min bus from departure to Magufuli bus terminal	1
t_0^{TR}	time wasted in the min bus from departure to Magufuli bus terminal (without transfer)	0
t_1^{TR}	time wasted in one transfer from one min bus to another to Magufuli bus terminal	0.5
t_2^{TR}	time wasted in two transfers from one min bus to another to Magufuli terminal	0.6
t_3^{TR}	time wasted on three transfers from one min bus to another to Magufuli terminal	0.7
$t_w^{ml \rightarrow mt}$	walking time from Mbezi Luis mini bus stand to Magufuli terminal	0.47

Numerical Simulation and Results

**Figure 1.** Shows that increase of bus transfer increase time to reach to Magufuli terminal.

The variation of time spent on vehicles with different values of bus transfer t are shown in Figure 1. It is observed that as t increases, the time spent on the vehicle to reach the Magufuli terminal increases as well. This occurs due to the time wasted by a passenger while moving from one min bus

to another min bus that has its own time of departing and depending on the availability of enough passengers. It is normal for a passenger to wait for a min bus for more than half an hour. This was found to disappoint passengers, especially those who make payment (i.e. bus fare) from the

Magufuli bus terminal to other regions or countries. This leads to disturbance even for passengers travelling with luggage to the Magufuli bus terminals, as they misplace them on the way to transfer or when brokers scrambling for passengers.

3.2.3. Focus Group Discussion

Focus group discussion supplemented the data collected through observation and interview to ensure that the collected information reflected the contemporary state of the quality of the bus terminal services. A total of 12 participants selected purposively based on their expertise in bus transport operations information offered, the focus group discussion involved participants whose service, age, education level, gender, and social status varied. These were conducted in three different sessions, each involving 4 participants. In this paper, the mixed method were employed for triangulation purposes [6, 7]. The collected data were then analysed before being presented.

4. Results and Discussion

The bus operators were found not to be satisfied with the service offered by the Magufuli bus terminal. The reasons for dissatisfaction are realized in the following ten aspects:

- 1) Absence of direct connectivity with rail, water, air, and land modes of transport
- 2) Lack of accessibility for private modes of transport such as cars, tricycles, motorcycle
- 3) Limited space for allowing storage of facilities
- 4) Absence of parking spaces for private vehicles and other modes of transports
- 5) Absence of integration between bus operators and commuter buses
- 6) Presence of bus operators who do not conform to the agreed principles of handling public transport (i.e. common fare or reasonable fare, scheduling time, and run of the service under a single registration system)
- 7) Lack of facilities for special groups (wheelchairs to help sick passengers and /or impaired passengers)
- 8) Lack of accessibility to receiving the parcels and storage
- 9) Lack of single transfer of commuter buses
- 10) Differences in the fare paid to similar destinations

Based on the nature of a group affected by the mentioned aspects, these reasons can be categorized into those related to bus operators and passengers. The dissatisfactions among bus operators are shown in aspects such as the absence of direct connectivity with other modes of transport, the presence of travel brokers, lack of accessible reacceptance and storage of parcels, and poor ticketing system. Passengers are not happy with aspects such as differences in the fare paid to similar destinations, lack of single transfer of commuter buses, lack of facilities for special groups, absence of enough parking spaces for private vehicles and other modes of transport, and

lack of accessibility for private modes. Nonetheless, differences in the fare paid to similar destinations and absence of direct connectivity with rail, water, air and land modes of transport, lack of single transfer of commuter buses, facilities for special groups and accessibility to reacceptance and storage of parcels were found to the causes of desertification among the dissatisfy both bus operators and passengers.

The absence of direct connection with other modes of transports, lack of accessible reacceptance and storage of parcels, and presence of travel brokers were found to contribute drastically to desertification of in of most of bus operators. Presumably, connectivity with transport modes such as railway, air ways, and commuters such as min buses, tricycles, and motorcycles simplifies not only the exercise of receiving and keeping parcel, but also discourage travel brokers and contribute in making bus terminals full of passengers; thus, permitting the operators to run their service smoothly. Disappointingly, the Magufuli bus terminal is shown to upset bus operators and passengers due to lack of the desired qualities.

Dissatisfactions with poor services offered by bus terminals has become a source of complaints among bus operators and passengers in several cities in the world. In the cities of the United States, dissatisfaction is due to poor service offered by intercity agents, as [1] observes that as bus operators and passengers were dissatisfied with the poor services offered in bus terminals, initiatives such as the introduction of express bus services and expansion of routes have been taken place to enhance accessibility and improve the service offered to operators and passengers. This means as the service offered by bus terminals drops, bus operators inevitably fail to handle the business. Therefore, bus terminal managements are called upon to evaluate their services regularly, identify areas of weaknesses; thus, improving their services.

In France, dissatisfaction in the services offered by bus terminals has been fixed through reviewing and deregulation of transport policy. [2] observes that the review and deregulation have taken place to liberalize the market and expand the services offered by bus terminals; thus, improving services' quality and contributing highly to the levels of customer satisfaction. In the city of Dar es Salaam, passengers were found to be disappointed with aspects such as differences in the fare paid by passengers travelling to similar destinations, lack of single transfer of commuter buses and the facilities for special groups, absence of enough parking spaces for private vehicles, and other modes of transport. However, if a review of available transport policies is done by liberalizing transport markets, and expanding the bus terminal services is conducted it can help to respond to the challenges of poor services offered and add to improving road transport.

In the course of the analysis, it was found that bus operators have been establishing their own bus stations in different streets in the city. These include those located in Gongo la Mboto, Chanika, Buza, Mbagala, Manzese, and Urafiki area. The services offered in these new stations are relatively better

compared to those which are offered by the Magufuli bus terminal. For instance, there is accessibility for private modes of transport such as cars and tricycles to enter the stations; passengers and parcels are easily transferred because taxes, tricycles and private cars have access to enter; there are no brokers (i.e. payments for tickets and parcels are done directly to bus operators' officers); they have enough spaces for storage of facilities, and transport services are offered instantly allowing integration with commuter buses. Besides, most of these bus stations allow single transfers of commuter buses, accessibility for receiving and keeping parcels to be transferred at reasonable payment and have an entrance for private cars to help special group passengers. As a result, passengers were found to prefer using the privately owned bus stations to terminals like the Magufuli; the reason being the differences in the quality of service offered. This was exhibited by the Swahili statements of one of the participants during the focus group discussion that:

'Nafuata nini kule kwa Magufuli, wapiga debe wamejaa, watakudananya kuwa utasafiri na lakishari unalipa nauli kubwa kumbe wanajua utakwenda na basi la kawaida tena kwa muda wanaopenda wao. Huku kwenye vituo binafsi wapiga debe hawaruhusiwi. Na kama una mgonjwa, au mzigo unapeleka moja kwa moja kwenye basi kwa usafiri wako'.

'when travelling, I am no longer going to Magufuli bus terminal because the private bus stations are currently scattered in Dar es Salaam. There is no reason for me to go there because the terminal is full of brokers who deceive me by demanding higher payments and misleading me about departing or arrival time and the kind of bus to travel with'[authors' translation].

This means a bus terminal whose management does not maintain quality services, it will inevitably lead to making bus operators fail to run the service, transfer only a few passengers or completely fail to run the business because of lacking passengers. As pointed out above, the inability to offer better and desired services by bus terminals does not only affect bus operators but also passengers. Passengers are disappointed with bus terminals which are full of brokers because they mislead them. They mislead a passengers into buy tickets at the rate of semi luxury buses or luxury buses while they know that such passengers will travel by ordinary buses. However, if a bus terminal had single transfers that is integrated to commuter buses, passengers would not experience such disturbances. Indeed, the fact that passengers experience disturbances from brokers explain as why both bus operators and passengers are not satisfied with the service offered in the bus terminals.

Nevertheless, [3] affirms that bus operators and passengers are satisfied with terminals that simplify the procedure to get tickets for buses of their choice, offers good services including customer care, free and clean washrooms, and simplify means of getting in and out of the bus with their belongings without fear of being stolen or disturbed by brokers to the bus

or from the bus to their destinations. This means if a bus terminal fails to simplify ways for buying tickets, lacks connection to commuters or entrance for private cars taking passengers with special needs to have access, and lacks facilities for special groups, it will be blamed; making bus operators and passengers respond differently to the challenges caused by poor services. In South Africa, aspects such as the use of alternative technologies, lowering of the handling bus costs by managing expenses with strict budget and monitoring, focusing on quality instead of quantity, and regularly patronizing young and upcoming operators have been implemented to address the challenges faced by bus operators [5]. This shows apart from letting bus operators build their bus stations and make passengers rely on the services offered by private sectors, aspects such as the use of alternative technologies or focusing on quality instead of quantity, and regularly patronizing young and upcoming operators can help to alleviate the challenges.

The bus terminal management should also keep evaluating its day-to-day service so that areas of improvement are identified and responded to instantly rather than leaving interlopers like brokers to compromise the quality of the services. As responsible officers of a bus terminal, managers can think of liberalizing the bus terminal services or expanding them by building supporting bus terminals in the city. [4] asserts that liberalization of the market and expansion in the services offered by bus terminal management also contribute to improvement of the services' quality and higher levels of customer satisfaction. Therefore, initiatives aimed at improving service quality and enhancing customer satisfaction in bus terminals are imperative in ensuring efficiency, safety, barrier-free and reliability of buses. This is based on the findings that factors such as reliability, safety, comfortability, accessibility and customer care significantly influence the customers' perception. The findings of the present study indicate satisfaction with bus terminals and bus stations is defined not only in terms of users' intention to continue using the service, willingness to recommend on it to others, and their overall fulfillment, but also their image and involvement of customers, as [9] has argued.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

The analysis made in this paper has offered sufficient evidence regarding the factors for dissatisfactions among bus operators in using public bus terminals along with their implications. It was shown that bust operators are dissatisfied with the services offered in public bus terminals due to several challenges. These include absence of direct connectivity with other modes of transport, a lack of accessibility to the private modes of transport, absence of parking spaces for private vehicles, absence of integration between bus operators and commuter buses, presence of bus brokers, a lack of the access to private cars with facilities for special groups, a lack of access to receiving the parcels and storage, lack of

single transfer of commuter buses, and differences in the fare paid for travelling to similar destinations. As an attempt to respond to these challenges and run the business, bus operators have been establishing their own stations on different streets within the city. The services offered in these privately owned stations are relatively better compared to those which are offered by the public bus terminals; hence, they attract many passengers to go for service by abandoning the public bus terminals. Therefore, it is clear that for a public bus terminal to offer a better service, it should maintain regular evaluations on its services so that it guarantees accessibility and integration with bus operators, commuter buses and other available modes of transport. These can take account of expansion in the service offered, building supporting terminals, focusing on the quality of services offered, introducing ride-sharing partnerships with private transport companies, and/or coordinating with local transport service providers to ensure passengers arriving at the terminals get more access to their destinations.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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