Augustus C. Amamilo

CONSUMER PROTECTION AND SERVICE DELIVERY AT DOMESTIC WINGS OF SELECTED AIRPORTS IN SOUTH-SOUT...

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CONSUMER PROTECTION AND SERVICE DELIVERY AT DOMESTIC WINGS OF SELECTED AIRPORTS IN SOUTH-SOUTH, NIGERIA.

Abstract: This research investigated consumer protection and service delivery at domestic wings of selected Airports in South-South Nigeria. A cross-sectional research design was used to administer copies of questionnaires to 398 randomly selected passengers. Findings showed the effectiveness of consumer protection mechanisms at a cumulative mean of 3.07, and a mean of 3.17, reflects the overall agreement that consumers are highly satisfied with the integration of technology in enhancing consumer protection and service delivery. More so, there is a perceived (mean: 2.08), lack of significant improvement in the efficiency of information dissemination through technological tools. Statistical analyses revealed significant associations: Ho1 showed a significant correlation (r=.965, p<.000) between existing consumer protection mechanisms' effectiveness and consumer satisfaction, the effectiveness of existing consumer protection mechanisms at domestic wings of airports in Nigeria accounted for 93.12% of the variance in the level of consumer satisfaction, and Ho2 result showed an F-statistic of 183.293 >0.000. both yielded statistically significant results, rejecting the null hypotheses and highlighting the substantial effectiveness of existing consumer protection mechanisms and technology on consumer satisfaction. In conclusion, this study offered valuable insights into consumer perceptions, emphasizing the imperative of improved communication and leveraging technology for enhanced consumer protection and service delivery. Recommendations include refining communication channels, and leveraging technology to further improve consumer experiences and protection.

Keywords: Consumer Protection Mechanisms, Technological Advancements, Service Delivery, Domestic Airports in Nigeria.

1. Introduction

Consumer protection is basically aimed at promoting and protecting the interest of consumers over services rendered. In line with this study, Consumer Protection Regulations are part of Nigeria Civil Aviation Regulations. They provide temporal and monetary care obligation on the part of the carrier or the passengers in the event of unforeseen circumstances. It is a unit in the aviation sector that addresses issues such as compensations for denied boarding, delays and cancellation of flights. It makes provisions for the minimum rights of passengers and obligation of airlines.

According to Monye et al. (2021), the Civil Aviation Act of 2006 is the primary vehicle through which consumer protection regulations in Nigeria was established. Passengers are entitled to a number of protections in the case of flight disruptions, including but not limited to: technical

issues, bad weather, limits imposed by air traffic control, security concerns, and labour conflicts. The following are examples of these rights: the right to a fair refund if one incurs losses, the right to have one's complaints or concerns about a service provider addressed in a timely manner, the right to know exactly where their flight stands at all times, and the right to be treated with kindness and respect no matter one's race or physical condition.

The aviation industry in 2019 contributed 0.14% to Nigerian's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) (Fakoyejo, 2020). The aviation industry has a significant impact on economic growth via the development of new businesses, the creation of employment, and the attraction of foreign capital. Even though plane tickets might be pricey, flying is still the most popular way to go throughout Nigeria. This explains why the business is bringing in more money for the government. On the other hand, passengers are facing a number of problems, such as flight delays, lost luggage and cargo, and near-misses, as a result of the increasing trend of abuse on consumer rights and the laissez-faire attitude to service delivery, which has contributed to discontent of dissatisfied customers (Monye, et. al., 2021). The consumer protection legal framework in the aviation industry is in need of re-evaluation due to the underutilization of the powers and functions of institutional agencies like the National Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA), the Federal Airport Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), among others (Nwakoby & Chukwujekwu, 2020).

The issue of continuous disregard for airline consumer rights and poor delivery services is real, airline customers are subjected to unpleasant instances of rights abuse, poor service packs, lost or damaged luggage, wrong destination arrival and random flight delays and cancellations caused by weather and technical issues, according to (Bamford & Xystouri, 2005; Tiernan et al., 2008), the Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA)'s Consumer Protection Unit (CPU) confirmed that out of 43,196 flight schedules issued by eight local carriers between January and September 2016,

24,075 were postponed and 854 were completely cancelled. Similarly, out of 10,366 local flight itineraries in the first quarter of 2017, the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reported 6,789 flights were delayed and 318 flights were cancelled entirely. According to Daramola (2014), these hardships can be attributed to a number of factors. These include, but are not limited to, the following: the high cost of aviation fuel recently, a shortage of aviation fuel and disruptions in the supply chain, aeroplanes with poor maintenance cultures, an inadequate number of technical experts, heavy debt loads and economic downturns, strict government policies, and inadequate protection from stronger, more established foreign competitors. In addition to the tales suggesting that service delivery in the airline operation is complicated, with several elements both preventable and unforeseen contributing to low delivery services, this urgently calls for the need for these inquiries involving Nigeria domestic airlines.

For the better part of three decades, airlines in Nigeria have paid little attention to the rights of their customers, the passengers, and the lack of an aviation agency to enforce the rules that do exist has only made matters worse. Nwakoby and Chukwujekwu (2020) found that domestic airlines often use excuses like poor weather or operational reasons to postpone or cancel flights without providing compensation. Flight delays have become the norm at Nigerian airports due to the authorities' inaction in enforcing the rules and the passing negligence of passengers. To tackle these concerns, the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) has implemented a passenger bill of rights that is outlined in the Nigerian Civil Aviation regulation. Air travel is highly valued in Nigeria, this regulation aims to protect passengers' rights and enhance their confidence in aviation services, with a strong emphasis on consumer protection.

Several studies (Adeola & Adebiyi, 2014; Chikwendu et al., 2012; Dike, 2013; Gambo, 2016) found that, among other things, travellers on domestic flights in Nigeria had negative experiences

with the customer care they received from airline front desk agents. As a result, with their rights being safeguarded, Nigerian airline operators in the domestic wing are under so much pressure to prove that their services are first-rated and customer-centric.

In view of these situation that this study examined consumer protection and service delivery at domestic wings of selected airports in south-south Nigeria. The study objectives are, to:

i.   evaluate the effectiveness of existing consumer protection mechanisms at domestic wings of airports in Nigeria, and

ii.   explore the impact of technological advancements on enhancing consumer protection and service delivery at domestic wings of airports in Nigeria

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Study Area

The study article is an extract from a Thesis work. The study is centred on south-south Nigeria. The south – south is an estimated area of about 70,000km² and one of the world's largest deltas. It is located in the Central part of Southern Nigeria between above latitude 5º33'49N and 6º31'38E in the North. Its Western boundary is given as Benin 5º44'11N and 5º03'49E and its Eastern boundary is Imo River 4º27'16N and 7º35'27E. The South – South is located along the Atlantic coast which forms the southern boundary of Nigeria, and it is the entrance of Rivers Niger and Benue into the ocean through a web of tributaries, (rivers, creeks and estuaries). Airports in the south – south part of Nigeria is about 6 (six) with operation premises across the region. Each of the states that make up the study area comprise of airports of varying category based on their level of operations and specialty. They range from international airports, domestic airports, specialised or

and military airlifts. Virtually all the airports are co-utilised by commercial airlines, private and military aircrafts for various operational services.
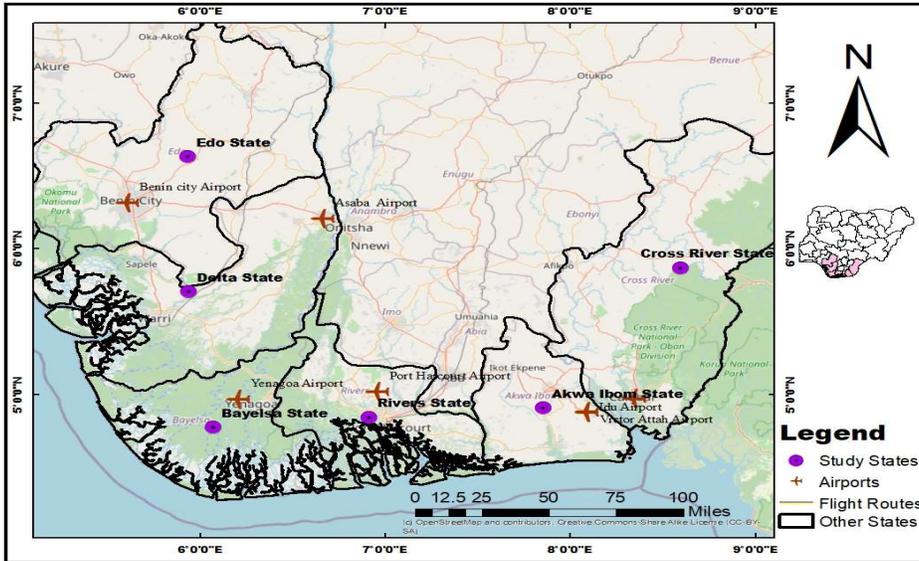
Figure 1: Study Area Map Showing Airports in South – South, Nigeria.

Source: Author's work, (2023)

2.2 Methods

A cross-sectional research design was used in this study. The study population of interest is centred on airports in the study area, which include the major airports in Bayelsa State, Cross River State, Delta State, Edo State, Rivers State and Akwa Ibom State. The population unit of inquiry were 87,229 passengers (users) of airlines generating its trips from the six (6) airports in the study area (Olawoye, 2024).

Table 1: Determination of Sample Size

Study Airports	List of Airline operators	Volume of Passenger Traffic	Proportional Method of Allocation
Bayelsa Airport	United Nation, Ibom Air	5,600	25.4
Delta State Airport	Max Air, Air Peace, Arik Air, Overland Airways, Aero Contractors, United Nigeria Airlines	8,164	36.7
Port Harcourt Int' Airport	Air Peace, Ibom Air, Aero Contractors, Arik Air, Green Africa Airways, Dana Airline	20,888	94.6
Margaret Ekpo International Airport, Cross River State	Air Peace, Ibom Air, Aero Contractors, Cally Air	8,547	38.3
Uyo Airport, Akwa Ibom State	Air Peace, Ibom Air	5,430	24
Benin Airport, Edo State	Air Peace, Arik Air, Aero Contractors, Green African Airways, Max Air	38,600	175.8
Total		**87,229**	**398**

Source: Author's work, 2024.

Since it is a large population, the overall population of interest was subjected to the Taro Yamane formula, which was used to establish a manageable population size, due to its homogenous characteristics. While the simple random sampling technique was applied in the course of the field survey, after taking prior permission from the airport authorities, airline management. The study also incorporated the **Inclusion Criteria** operational airports, airline staffs and air bound passengers from the domestic wings of Asaba Airport, Bayelsa International Airport, Calabar

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Airport (Margaret Ekpo International Airport), Benin Airport, Port Harcourt International Airport, and Uyo Airport only were included, and the **Exclusion Criteria** The operational airport, airline staffs and air bound passengers who are not on the inclusion criteria list but from the international wing, and the military airlift terminal from the Airforce base were excluded.

The Taro Yamane formula was used to establish a manageable research population by substituting the whole population of interest. (sample size) as shown below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where: n = the sample size

N = the total population

e = the error of sampling/accepted error limits (0.05%)

1 = the constant figure/level of precision.

In substituting into the taro Yamane formula, we have;

$$n = \frac{87229}{1 + 87229(0.05)^2}$$

n   =   398 (Sample size)

The survey instrument was distributed to the sample strata using the proportionate method of allocation as adopted from Amamilo, (2021), see table 1.

Where $\frac{Np \times n}{N}$

Np   =   Total population of each stratum

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n   –   Sample size

N   –   Total population of the study

The nature of data utilised for this study was based on the scientific methods of data gathering. The primary data and secondary data were majorly incorporated. Thus; primary data was obtained by using a reconnaissance survey to obtain operational data, key informant interviews with airline traffic managers and heads of consumer protection units at the airports, and well-structured pre-tested passenger questionnaire were utilised for the purpose of academic research, thus their biodata were obtained excluding their names. While the secondary data was gathered from documented reports from relevant journals and publications found in libraries and internet. 398 copies of four-point Likert scale questionnaire was administered to airline passengers plying the domestic wing of Nigeria Airports through physical survey method to obtain valuable responses of interest.

The data obtained were analysed descriptively in relation to each objective, it took the form of frequency and percentage distribution tables, mean and standard deviation to present and analyse the data obtained. The study hypothesis one state that there is no significant relationship between the effectiveness of existing consumer protection mechanisms at domestic wings of airports in Nigeria and the level of consumer satisfaction was tested with Pearson Product Moment Correlation, hypothesis two which state that there is no significant relationship between the impact of technological advancements on enhancing consumer protection and service delivery at domestic wings of airports in Nigeria and overall consumer satisfaction was tested with Analysis of variance (ANOVA). The null hypotheses were examined with a computer in the environment of statistical package for social science (SPSS version 23.2).

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3. Results and Discussion

Table 2: Perceived consumer protection mechanisms at domestic wings of airports in Nigeria

S/N	Variables	Respondents' responses		
		$\overline{X}$	$S.D$	Remark
1	The airport's customer service is completely unresponsive to consumer complaints.	2.41	1.07	Disagree
2	The airport generally communicates important information effectively, but there is room for improvement.	2.95	0.95	Agree
3	The airport is consistently ineffective in resolving consumer complaints promptly.	2.82	1.18	Agree
4	The complaint channels are generally accessible, but improvements could be made	3.52	0.50	Agree
5	I feel the compensation provided by the airport is inadequate for the issues faced.	3.76	0.43	Agree
6	The airport does not adequately inform consumers about their rights, leading to widespread ignorance	3.45	0.60	Agree
7	I am highly satisfied with the consumer protection mechanisms in place at the airport.	2.58	0.83	Agree
	Grand mean	**3.07**	**0.79**	**Agree**

Source: Author's computation, 2024.

In the exploration of perceived consumer protection procedures at Nigerian domestic airport wings, the findings unveil insightful perspectives among respondents. While there is a general disagreement (mean = 2.41) regarding the airport's customer service being unresponsive to complaints, respondents express more positive sentiments towards communication effectiveness (mean = 2.95) and the accessibility of complaint channels (mean = 3.52), indicating areas with room for improvement. Notably, the study highlights concern with the airport's ability to promptly resolve customer problems (mean = 2.82) and the perceived insufficiency of compensation for

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encountered issues (mean = 3.76). Additionally, respondents noted a lack of adequate information on consumer rights (mean = 3.45). Despite these apprehensions, the overall satisfaction with consumer protection mechanisms at the airport is moderate, with a mean score of 2.58, suggesting an overall agreement with perceived consumer protection mechanisms. The grand mean, calculated across all variables, is 3.07, emphasizing the need for airports to focus on communication, timely complaint resolution, and consumer rights awareness to enhance the effectiveness of their consumer protection measures and improve passenger satisfaction.

Further strengthening these findings, the study reveals a significant correlation coefficient between the effectiveness of existing consumer protection mechanisms at domestic wings of airports in Nigeria and the level of consumer satisfaction (r=.965, p<.000). This result, indicating that the effectiveness of consumer protection mechanisms accounts for 93.12% of the variance in consumer satisfaction, underscores the critical role these measures play in shaping passengers' overall contentment. The study's insights align with existing research, such as the work of Koklic, Kukar-Kinney & Vegelj (2017), emphasizing a positive correlation between consumer protection measures and passenger satisfaction in the airline industry. Furthermore, the identification of communication, timely complaint resolution, and consumer rights awareness as key areas for improvement resonates with recommendations made by Rahman et al. (2017), highlighting the study's contribution to the broader literature on enhancing consumer satisfaction in aviation.

The study's comprehensive analysis provides valuable insights into the current state of consumer protection at Nigerian domestic airports. The identified areas for improvement, supported by the correlation analysis, emphasize the importance of addressing communication gaps, improving timely complaint resolution, and enhancing consumer rights awareness to elevate overall passenger satisfaction. These findings contribute to the ongoing discourse on consumer

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satisfaction in the aviation industry and offer practical implications for airport management and policymakers.

Hypothesis 1:

H_0: There is no significant relationship between the effectiveness of existing consumer protection mechanisms at domestic wings of airports in Nigeria and the level of consumer satisfaction.

H_1: There is a significant relationship between the effectiveness of existing consumer protection mechanisms at domestic wings of airports in Nigeria and the level of consumer satisfaction.

Table 3: Correlation coefficient between the effectiveness of existing consumer protection mechanisms at domestic wings of airports in Nigeria and the level of consumer satisfaction.

Correlations		Consumer protection mechanisms	The level of consumer satisfaction
Consumer protection mechanisms	Pearson Correlation	1	.965
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	398	398
The level of consumer satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.965	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	398	398

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: Author's computation, 2024.

Table 3 shows the Correlation coefficient between effectiveness of existing consumer protection mechanisms at domestic wings of airports in Nigeria and level of consumer satisfaction. The Correlation coefficient between effectiveness of existing consumer protection mechanisms at domestic wings of airports in Nigeria and the level of consumer satisfaction was significant at (r=.965, p<.000). The effectiveness of existing consumer protection mechanisms at domestic

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wings of airports in Nigeria accounted for 93.12% of the variance in the level of consumer satisfaction.

Table 4: Perception of the impact of technological advancements on enhancing consumer protection and service delivery at domestic wings of airports in Nigeria

S/N	Variables	Respondents' responses		
		$\overline{X}$	S.D	Remark
1	Technological advancements have significantly improved consumer protection and service delivery at domestic airports.	3.70	0.51	Agree
2	Technological tools have not significantly improved the efficiency of information dissemination, leading to gaps in consumer awareness.	2.08	0.65	Disagree
3	Technological advancements have made it exceptionally easy for consumers to access and utilize grievance resolution platforms at domestic airports	3.25	0.94	Agree
4	Technological tools enable real-time communication during flight delays, keeping passengers informed and minimizing dissatisfaction.	3.34	0.67	Agree
5	Technological advancements have not significantly contributed to enhancing security measures, leaving consumers vulnerable	3.47	0.68	Agree
6	Technological advancements have greatly improved the efficiency of baggage tracking, reducing the incidence of lost or mishandled luggage	3.11	0.92	Agree
7	Consumers are highly satisfied with the overall integration of technology in enhancing consumer protection and service delivery at domestic airports	3.24	0.95	Agree
	Grand mean	**3.17**	**0.76**	**Agree**

Source: Author's computation, 2024.

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The insights derived from the study offer a comprehensive understanding of how technological advancements impact consumer protection and service delivery at domestic airports in Nigeria. Respondents overwhelmingly agree (mean: 3.70) that technology has significantly improved these aspects, reflecting a positive impact on the overall airport experience. However, there is a perceived lack of significant improvement in information dissemination efficiency through technological tools, leading to gaps in consumer awareness (mean: 2.08). Despite this, there is a general consensus (mean: 3.25) that technological advancements have made grievance resolution platforms exceptionally easy for consumers to access. The findings also indicate that technological tools enable real-time communication during flight delays (mean: 3.34), contributing to passenger satisfaction and minimizing dissatisfaction. While respondents acknowledge that technological advancements have not significantly contributed to enhancing security measures (mean: 3.47), they recognize a positive impact on consumer vulnerability. Moreover, technological advancements are seen to greatly improve the efficiency of baggage tracking, reducing the incidence of lost or mishandled luggage (mean: 3.11). The grand mean of 3.17, with a standard deviation of 0.76, reflects an overall agreement among respondents that consumers are highly satisfied with the integration of technology in enhancing consumer protection and service delivery at domestic airports. This underscores the positive perception of the role of technology in various aspects of airport operations, contributing to an improved overall passenger experience.

Additionally, the ANOVA results presented in Table 4 demonstrate significant differences among groups, with a high F-statistic of 183.293 and a p-value of .000. These results suggest that technological advancements play a statistically significant role in shaping consumer protection and service delivery in the domestic wings of Nigerian airports, highlighting the importance of technology in this context. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected. This finding aligns with

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existing research by Bogicevic (2017), Bezerra & Gomes (2020), and Bakır et al. (2022), emphasizing the positive influence of technology on airport operations, passenger experience, and overall satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2

Ho: There is no significant relationship between the impact of technological advancements on enhancing consumer protection and service delivery at domestic wings of airports in Nigeria and overall consumer satisfaction.

H1: There is a significant relationship between the impact of technological advancements on enhancing consumer protection and service delivery at domestic wings of airports in Nigeria and overall consumer satisfaction.

Table 5: Summary of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the impact of technological advancements on enhancing consumer protection and service delivery at domestic wings of airports in Nigeria.

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	75.968	19	3.998	183.293	.000
Within Groups	8.246	378	.022		
Total	84.214	397			

Source: Author's computation, 2024.

Table 5 presents the ANOVA results for evaluating the impact of technological advancements on consumer protection and service delivery at domestic wings of airports in Nigeria. The analysis considers two sources of variation: "Between Groups" and "Within Groups." The results show significant differences among groups, with a high F-statistic of 183.293 and a p-value of .000, indicating that the observed variations are not due to chance. This suggests that technological advancements play a statistically significant role in shaping consumer protection and service

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delivery in the domestic wings of Nigerian airports, emphasizing the importance of technology in this context. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

4. Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents

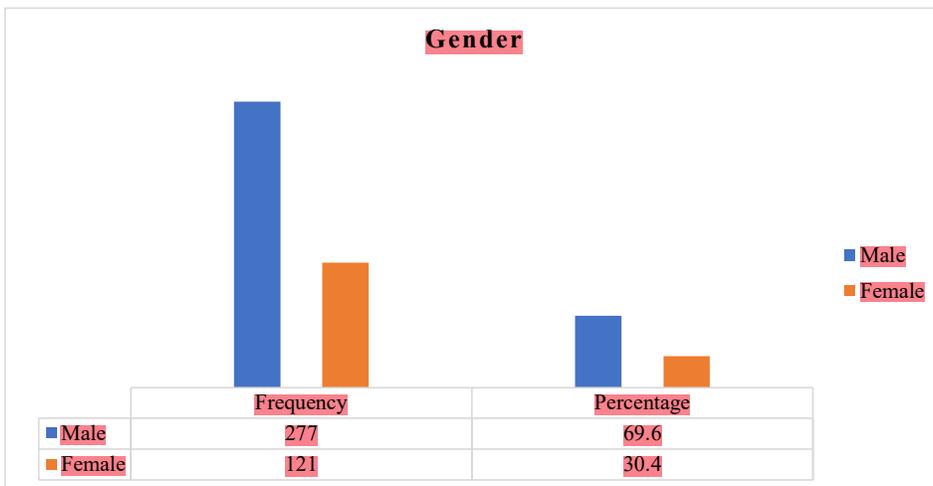|	Frequency	Percentage
■ Male	277	69.6
■ Female	121	30.4

Figure 1: Gender of the Respondent
Source: Author's Computation, 2024

As presented in Figure 1, a total of 398 respondents responded to the instrument, of which 277 (69.6%) were males and 121 (30.4%) were females. Everyone participated in the study by completing the questionnaire. This shows that the population of the affected respondents is predominated by males in the study area.

Gender-Specific Insights: Consumer protection issues and service delivery experiences in domestic airports may vary between male and female passengers. For instance, females may face unique challenges or concerns related to safety, security, or access to facilities compared to males. Therefore, a more balanced gender distribution in the sample would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of these gender-specific dynamics.
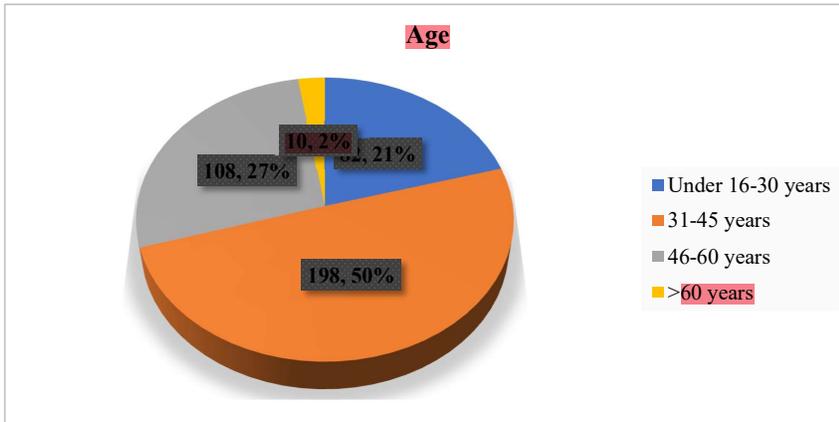
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Figure 2: Age of the Respondents
Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

The age distribution in Figure 4.2 shows that most respondents are between 31–45 years (49.7%), followed by those aged 46–60 years (27.1%). Younger respondents aged 16–30 make up 20.6%, while only 2.5% are above 60. This pattern suggests that middle-aged and older adults dominate air travel and may have higher service expectations. Younger travellers likely have different preferences, while older passengers may require more support. These differences highlight the need for inclusive, age-sensitive consumer protection and service delivery at Nigeria's domestic airports.
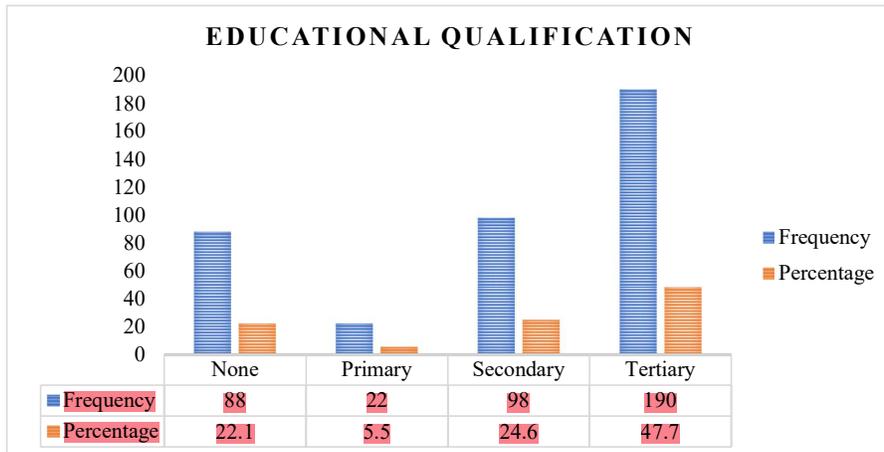
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Figure 3. Educational Qualification
Source: Author's Computation, 2024

Figure 3 shows that 47.7% of respondents have tertiary education, 24.6% have secondary education, 22.1% have no formal education, and 5.5% have primary education. This mix highlights a largely educated passenger base with higher expectations for service quality and consumer protection at domestic airports. At the same time, the notable share of travellers with little or no schooling calls for clearer information, supportive services, and accessible complaint channels to ensure all passengers understand and enjoy their rights.

5. Conclusion

The study highlights several key findings regarding consumer perceptions and impact of technological advancements at Nigerian domestic airport. The study establishes a significant correlation between the effectiveness of consumer protection mechanisms and consumer satisfaction, emphasizing the need for improvement in these areas. Also, the study underscores the

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positive impact of technological advancements on consumer protection and service delivery, despite some challenges. The findings suggest opportunities for airports and airlines to enhance communication, resolve grievances more efficiently, and leverage technology to improve the overall passenger experience. Based on this study findings, thus the following recommendations: Enhance communication channels to keep passengers informed about flight status, services, and consumer rights, addressing concerns raised in the study, and invest in technology to further improve consumer protection, communication, and service delivery, considering the positive impact highlighted in the study.

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