

**SERVICE QUALITY, CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND BEHAVIOURAL INTENTIONS: APPLICATION OF LODGING QUALITY INDEX MODEL ON HOTELS IN SOUTH EAST, NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study aimed to assess the relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions of guests at selected 3-star hotels in Onitsha business district and Enugu metropolis in South East, Nigeria. Survey design was adopted for the study. The target populations were guests in the 3-star hotels from the ages of 18 years and above. A structured questionnaire was administered to 200 guests of the hotels. The data collected were analyzed with descriptive statistics, such as frequency and percentages, and tested with Pearson Correlations to examine the nature of relationships between service quality dimensions, customer satisfaction, and behavioural intentions. The results show that the service quality dimensions; tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, confidence, communication, had strong relationships with customer satisfaction. The result equally revealed that customer satisfaction had a strong relationship with behavioural intentions. That is, the guests of the hotels were satisfied with the services, and are willing to recommend, revisit, and give positive reviews.*

**KEYWORDS:** service quality, customer satisfaction, LODQUAL, hotels, Nigeria

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Travel and tourism is fast becoming one of the main focus for economic revitalization globally and especially in developing countries like Nigeria (Awodele & Ayeni, 2011). International tourism accounts for 29% of the world's services exports and 7% of overall exports of goods and services. The development of tourism destination areas all over the world has contributed to the increase in international tourist arrivals. The number of international tourist arrivals worldwide reached 1.4 billion in 2018. Total export revenues from international tourism reached USD 1.7 trillion in 2018 (UNWTO, 2019).

Nigeria, one of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa is benefiting from the growth in the tourism industry. The total contribution of travel and tourism to GDP was US \$6,971.9 million 1.9% of GDP in 2019, and is forecast to rise by 4.0% per annum to US\$29.7bn, 4.5% of GDP in 2027. On employment, travel and tourism contributed 1,254,400 jobs to total employment, and it is expected

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to rise by 3.6% per annum to 2,598,000 jobs in 2027. On visitor exports, US \$2,549.1 million was generated in 2019 (World Economic Forum, 2019). Based on these contributions of tourism to host countries, it is thus, critical for countries to promote policies that foster the continued growth of tourism.

Meanwhile, the hotel industry in Nigeria has continued to contribute significantly to the growth of the economy through the retail and wholesale of a range of accommodation and related services (Bello, Bello & Obiora, 2017; Bello, Udi, Bello & Raja, 2016). The industry is projected to experience an increase in the number of hotel rooms 8,400 available in 2013 to about 24,000 rooms in 2018 (Bello & Majebi, 2018). This increase is expected to accommodate the domestic tourists and ever increasing international tourist arrivals to the country and provide them with expected services.

In the business world, service quality has become a key strategic factor for differentiating products and services from that of competitors. Many researchers have shown that service quality increases market share, customer satisfaction, responsiveness towards customer order, customer retention and loyalty, greater return on investment and lowers production cost (Alemneh & Gebremichael, 2018; Ali, 2015, Eshetie, Seyoum & Ali, 2016, Mbuthia, Muthoni & Muchina, 2014; Alemneh, 2018). It plays a significant role in service industry and studies have found that there is a positive relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction, resulting to customer loyalty/retention and repeat customer purchase behaviour (Bello & Bello, 2016; Watiki, 2014; Fukey, 2013; Goddard, 2013; Gumussoy & Koseoglu, 2016; Bucak, 2014; Han & Omar, 2014; Minh & Huu, 2016; Kangogo & Manyasi, 2013; Poku, Zakari & Soali, 2013; Rao & Sahu, 2013; Jasinskas, Stremikiene, Svagzdiene & Simanavicius, 2016; Tessera, Hussain & Ahmad, 2016).

The knowledge of customer satisfaction and the resulting behavioural intentions are becoming more important these days in the service industries especially in travel and tourism industry. The understanding of customer satisfaction enables the hotel to know how customers define the service and products quality, facilitates the development of customer satisfaction questionnaires (Haye 1997; cited in Alemneh & Gebremichael, 2018). It also impacts on the repeat visitation and word of mouth recommendation (Berkman & Gilson, 1986; cited in Alemneh & Gebremichael, 2018). When a customer feels satisfied, he/she spends more time and buys more because of pleasant environment stimuli (Bohl, 2012, Chebat, Sirgy & Grzeskowiak, 2010; Hussain & Ali, 2015; Fatima & Rasheed, 2018; Mokwuah, 2018). Customer satisfaction leads to repeat visits, customer loyalty and relationship commitment. In addition, when tourists are satisfied and delighted, they spread positive word-of-mouth (WOM), thereby attracting new visitors.

The hotel industry in Nigeria has continued to experience growth and increase in the number of hotel rooms from 8,400 available in 2013 to about 24,000 rooms in 2018 (Bello & Majebi, 2018). The increment in the number of available rooms in the Nigeria hotels does not reflect a corresponding increase in the average occupancy rate, as data from Statista (2018) shows that most

hotels in Nigeria operate under 50% of their available room capacity from 2014 to 2018. The low occupancy rate and low number of the international tourist arrivals pose a great challenge to the industry.

Meanwhile, review of literature in the Nigeria context reveals a limited investigation in the area of service quality and customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry. Bello and Majebi (2018), conducted a study on lodging quality index approach: exploring the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in hotel in Benin. Igwe and Kalu (2017) examined the service innovativeness and customer satisfaction of Four Star Hotels in Rivers State; Nduka, Okocha and Chris-Nnamchi (2017) worked on diagnostics of customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry. Evidence from Nigeria, Gambo (2016) investigated service quality and customer satisfaction among domestic air passengers in Nigeria. However, none of these studies focused on how service quality dimensions influence customer satisfaction and the resulting behavioural intentions with the application of LODGING QUALITY INDEX for 3-star hotels in Onitsha Business District and Enugu Metropolis in the South East of Nigeria. Besides, most of the studies relating to service quality and customer satisfaction used SERVQUAL, which has been criticized by various researchers for been too generic and widely used in others service sector not related to hotels. Thus, there is a need to investigate the relationship between service quality dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, confidence, communication, and customer satisfaction, and also the resulting behavioural intentions such as repeat visit and positive word of mouth in 3 star hotels in the region using LODGING QUALITY INDEX model.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Hotel Industry in Nigeria**

Before the arrival of the colonialists, there was no recorded theory or concept about a commercial sector that provided accommodation to strangers and travellers in Nigeria. During this period, people lived and worked in their various communities and villages, and those that travelled out of their communities were mostly artisans who travel for business purposes. In the course of the travel, rudimentary shelter and refreshments were offered in exchange for little or no compensation at all (Nwosu, 2016). The colonial era ushered in accommodation in the form of lodging houses. It was under this period that the first commercial hotels, Bristol and Grand hotels opened in 1942.

The post-independence era saw the establishment of different types of hotels due to rapid increase in the inter-regional travels for business and political activities. Government in various regions opened up hotels to cater for the accommodation needs of the travellers. Besides, some international brands, such as Sheraton, Hilton, Best Western, etc., also entered the industry to provide standardized services. This era has recorded also a growing number of independent and family owned hotels across various states in Nigeria.

It has been observed over the years that lack of reliable statistics and market information are the major challenges facing the hotel industry in Nigeria (Bankole, 2002; Nwosu, 2016). Most of the data used are from the independent bodies and organisations. Information from hotels.ng, an online travel agency in Nigeria estimate that there are 12, 835 hotels in Nigeria. Lagos State has the largest hotel market with about 3,218 hotels, followed by Abuja the capital and the sit of government with 1,080 hotels. Meanwhile, there is no verification on the class of these hotels as regards to international standards. These hotels are scattered in different cities in Nigeria, and are expected to provide accommodation to the ever increasing number of international tourists' arrivals and domestic tourists in Nigeria.

There has been an increase on the international tourist arrivals to Nigeria, it has increased from 1,111,000 in 2006 to 1,889,000 in 2019 and it has contributed up to US \$6,971.9 million, 1.9% of GDP in 2019 (World Bank, 2019). Besides the contributions of international tourism, the domestic economy is the key driver of tourism in Nigeria with 97% of tourist spending in Nigeria in 2017 was generated by domestic travellers (Pwc, 2018).

<b>Years</b>	<b>International Tourist Arrivals</b>	<b>International Tourism Receipts \$</b>
2019	1,889,000	2,549,100,000
2018	1,276, 000	410,766,300
2017	1,255,000	403,900,000
2016	1,889,000	2,611,000,000
2015	1,255,000	470,000,000
2014	854,000	601,000,000
2013	600,000	616,000,000
2012	486,000	639,000,000
2011	715,000	688,000,000
2010	1,555,000	736,000,000
2009	1,141,000	761,000,000
2008	1,131,000	959,000,000
2007	1,212,000	337,000,000
2006	1,111,000	209,000,000

Table 1: International Tourist Arrivals and Tourism Receipts for Nigeria 2006 – 2019.

Sources: Authors' compilation from World Economic Forum and World Bank various Issues

The industry outlook by Pwc (2018) shows that guest nights increased from 1.6 million in 2017 and by the forecast, expected to rise at a 7.5% to 2.3 million in 2022. Meanwhile, the average room rate increased by 4.8% in 2017, while the overall room revenue is expected to increase at 12.6% from \$210 million in 2017 to \$380 million in 2022.

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	CAGR <sup>1</sup>
Available rooms (thousands)	8.0	8.4	8.8	9.2	9.4	9.7	10.0	10.6	11.2	11.4	12.6	5.4
Guest nights (millions)	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.9	2.1	2.3	7.5
Occupancy rates (%)	54.6	55.4	49.8	44.7	43.6	45.2	46.6	46.5	46.4	50.5	50.0	
ADR (US\$)	105	108	112	118	125	131	137	144	151	158	165	4.7
Total room revenue (US\$)	168	184	179	177	188	210	233	259	287	332	380	12.6
<b>% change year on year</b>												
Available rooms	1.3	5.0	4.8	4.5	2.2	3.2	3.1	6.0	5.7	1.8	10.5	
Guest nights	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.9	2.1	2.3	
ADR	54.6	55.4	49.8	44.7	43.6	45.2	46.6	46.5	46.4	50.5	50.0	
Total room revenue	9.8	9.5	-2.7	-1.1	6.2	11.7	11.0	11.2	10.8	15.7	14.5	

**Table 2: Nigeria Hotel Industry Performance from 2012 – 2022.**

**Source: Pwc (2018). PwC Hotels outlook: 2018-2022: South Africa – Nigeria – Mauritius – Kenya – Tanzania. [www.pwc.co.za/outlook](http://www.pwc.co.za/outlook)**

### Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction

In a competitive environment, as competition and cost increase, and productivity and quality decrease, firms in service industry face the task of increasing their competitive differentiation, service quality and productivity, Kotler (2000) in Nduka, Okocha and Chris-Nnamchi (2017). According to Zeithaml, (1988) as cited by Ali (2015), the construct of service quality mainly assesses the perceived quality which is referred to as consumer's judgment about an entity overall excellence or superiority. Many researchers, over the last three decades have focused their attention towards the service quality concept due to its significant influence on firm performance, customer satisfaction, retention, loyalty and profitability (Ali, 2015; Eghetie, Seyoum & Ali, 2016; Boon-itt & Rompho, 2012; Bello & Majebi, 2018; Musa, 2016; Jasinskas, Streimikiene, Svagzdiene & Simanavicius, 2016; Tessera, Hussain & Ahmad, 2016; Maghzi, Abbaspour, Eskandarian & Hamid, 2011; Minh & Hun, 2016; Mbuthia, Muthoni & Muchina, 2013; Cronin & Taylor, 1992). Service quality is seen as the difference between customers' expectations for the service encounter and the perceptions of the service received (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1988). It is predicted that customers will judge quality as 'low' if performance does not meet their expectations and quality as 'high' when performance matches or exceeds expectations (Oliver, 1980).

In its operationalization, many studies agree with multi-dimensionality of service quality (Lien & Kao, 2008, in Ali, 2015). Gronroos (1982) proposed two service quality dimensions: technical and functional quality. The technical quality reflect a material basis and functional or process quality (Vitkiene, 2004 in Tasinkas et al. 2016). In a bid to expanding on technical and functional quality model, Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry (1985) came up with the idea of expectations and



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perceptions of service quality through the gap model. This model focuses on the discrepancy between expectations and perceptions of the customers regarding ten dimensions of service quality which were later reduced by Parasuraman et al (1988) to five dimensions known as SERVQUAL measurement instrument (reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles). Many studies, across different industries applied SERVQUAL in measuring service quality (Poku, Zakari & Soali, 2013; Abdllah & Hairil, 2012; Lestari & Saputra, 2018; Tessera et al, 2016; Gambo, 2016; Ali & Yuan, 2013; Parasuraman, et al; 1988; Jasinskas et al; 2016). These studies considered only the perception of customers. According to Ali (2015), various studies reported issues with the applicability and universality of SERVQUAL dimensions across service industries. This led to scholars modifying SERVQUAL with different dimensions and terminologies.

Many scholars have studied the validity of the SERVQUAL measurement scale with the hospitality industry (Su & Sun, 2007; Ramsaran Fowdar, 2007; Yilmaz, 2009; Markovic & Raspor, 2010; Getty & Thompson, 1994; Renganathan, 2011; Boon-Liat & Zabid, 2013). Varying views of scholars on how service quality in the hotel industry is measured and the fact that SERVQUAL can be employed in all the service-based industry, led to the development of other measurement scale specifically for hotel industry. Such measurement scale was proposed by Mei, Dean and White (1999) with three dimensions named as HOLSERV. The dimensions are reliability, tangibles and employees. Getty and Thompson (1994) developed another scale named LODGQUAL and it was based on the SERVQUAL model, borrowing its scale from the main structure and eight step procedures (Parasuraman et al; 1988; Churchill & Carol, 1982). LODGQUAL model presents service quality in the hotel industry as consisting of five dimensions and 26 items. These are; tangibility, reliability (including original reliability and credibility dimensions), responsiveness, confidence (including original competence, courtesy, security and access dimensions) and communication (including original communication and understanding dimensions (Bello & Majebi, 2018).

### **Customer Satisfaction**

Customer satisfaction has been acknowledged as an essential factor to the success of businesses (Maghzi, et al; 2011). In our ever changing environment, service providers can sustain their competitive advantage by offering high quality services to their customers (Hu et al; 2009; Ali, 2015). Studies have shown that a satisfied customer brings lot of advantages to the service providers including loyalty, referral, and payment of premium prices (Ali, 2015; Amin et al; 2013; Dominici & Guzzo, 2010, Kin & Lee, 2010). The importance of customer satisfaction has attracted the attention of the academicians, researchers and practitioners. Oliver (1980) sees satisfaction an attitude or evaluation that is formed by the customer comparing their purchase expectation and perception. In 1981, he simplifies it as customer's emotional reaction to a specific product/service experience. Kotler (2000, p.36) defines customer satisfaction as "a person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to his or her expectation.

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## **Behavioural Intentions**

Behavioural intentions could be seen as the would-be attitude of customers after patronizing a firm. Behavioural intentions signals if the customers will remain with or switch from the company (Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1996). The intentions customers are either favourable or unfavourable (Ali, 2015). The favourable intentions includes, positive word of mouth, loyalty, increase in length of stay, paying premium prices, positive reviews (Ali, 2015, Abdullah & Mohad, 2012; Little 2011; Cvent, 2013; Kapiki, 2012; Natuhwera, 2011; Kangogo & Manyasi, 2013). On the other hand, dissatisfied customers tend to exhibit unfavourable attitudes such as switching the service provider, negative word of mouth, negative reviews, spending less time and money, and taking legal action (Ali, 2015; Litrin, 2006; Ladhiri, 2009; Ali & Amin, 2014).

## **LODGING QUALITY INDEX Model**

The Lodging Quality Index Model was developed based on SERVQUAL (Parasuraman, 1985), by Getty and Thompson (1994). It was as result of the varying views of researchers on how service quality in the hotel industry is measured, and the fact that the concept of service quality is multifaceted (Bello & Majebi, 2018). The model is designed to overcome some challenges relating to the application of SERVQUAL model in assessing service quality in hospitality and tourism industry. The developers of this model argued that while SERVQUAL can be employed to measure service quality in all the service based industries, the Lodging Quality Index Model is specially designed and employed only in the hotel industry (Bello & Majebi, 2018). Based on SERVQUAL model, and the eight-step procedure of Churchill (1979), the Lodging Quality Index Model was developed by Getty and Thompson (1994). The model presents service quality in the hotel industry as consisting of five dimensions and 26 items. These include: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, confidence and communication.

## **Research Hypotheses**

In the earlier discussion, majority of the scholars believe that service quality is a complex construct and should be measured with multidimensional scales. Many authors who studied the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction show evidence to support a causal relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction (Yee, Yeung & Cheng, 2011; Naik, Gantasala & Prabhaka, 2010; Eshetie et al; 2016; Minh & Huu, 2016; Ali, 2015; Amin et al; 2013; Riju & Han, 2010; Dominici & Guzzo, 2010; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Gronroos, 1990; Parasuraman et al; 1988). Considering service quality in hotel, five LODQUAL dimensions are considered (Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Confidence, and Communication) and equally tested to confirm the significant impact of the dimensions on customer satisfaction. Based on these, therefore, the hypotheses are developed as:

- H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant relationship between tangibility and customer satisfaction.
- H<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant relationship between reliability and customer satisfaction.
- H<sub>3</sub>: There is a significant relationship between responsiveness and customer satisfaction.

H<sub>4</sub>: There is a significant relationship between confidence and customer satisfaction.

H<sub>5</sub>: There is a significant relationship between communication and customer satisfaction.

Previous studies have equally agreed that customer satisfaction has a significant impact on behavioural intentions in the travel and tourism industry. These studies believe that high level of satisfaction leads to repeat visit, referral, recommendation and positive review (Little, 2011; Getty & Thompson, 1994; Kapiki, 2012; Ali, 2015). Therefore, we state the next hypothesis thus:

H<sub>6</sub>: Customer satisfaction has a significant influence on behavioural intentions.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Sample***

Sample design was employed for this study and guest's ratings of the hotel attributes were determined from 3-star hotels in Enugu and Onitsha. The cities were selected based on their ability to attracting high number of domestic and international tourists. Onitsha hosts the largest marketplace in West Africa, while Enugu hosts the only international airport in the region, the city is assumed to be the political headquarters of the region and equally host a number of universities and institutions of higher learning. The target populations are guests in the hotels from the ages of 18 years and above. Meanwhile, due to lack of reliable statistics and market information, which are the major challenges facing the hotel industry (Nwosu, 2016), we decided to conveniently select a total number of 200 guests (120 in Enugu & 80 in Onitsha) as the sample size.

A five-point Likert scale were employed in this study starting from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A structured questionnaire was adapted from the Lodging Quality Index Model developed by Getty and Thompson (1994). The model presents service quality in the hotel industry as consisting of five dimensions and 26 items. These include: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, confidence and communication. The questions on Customer Satisfaction and Behavioural Intentions were adapted from Ali, (2015). The questionnaire were distributed with the help of hotel managers to 200 guests of the hotels (total of 10 hotels were observed) out of which 180 were valid, and the retrieve rate was 90%. All the vital information were anonymously and voluntarily provided, with prior consent of the respondents.

### ***Instrument and Measurement***

This study made use of a structured questionnaire with 26 questions which contained 5 attributes (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, confidence & communication) for service quality, 4 questions for customer satisfaction, and another 4 questions for behavioural intentions. The guests rated the performance of the attributes on a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).



**Data Analysis**

The data collected through the research instrument were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical tools with the aid of IBM SPSS 20.0 and the stated hypotheses were tested with Pearson Moment Correlation in order to determine the relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions.

**FINDINGS****Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Variables	Option	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	132	73.3
	Female	48	26.7
Age	18-25	11	6.1
	26-33	29	16.1
	34-45	83	46.1
	46-65	57	31.7
Education	Primary	39	21.7
	Secondary	56	31.1
	Tertiary	85	47.2
Nationality	Nigeria	173	96.1
	Foreigner	7	3.9
Marital Status	Married	132	73.3
	Single	37	20.6
	Widow/Divorced	11	6.1
Occupation	Student	05	2.8
	Civil Servants	64	35.6
	Self-Employed	111	61.6
Purpose of visit	Leisure	83	46.1
	Business	67	37.2
	Conference/Seminar	11	6.1
	Visit relatives	19	10.6

**Source: Field Survey**

This table shows demographic characteristics of the respondents, out of the 180 respondents, 132(73.3%) were male, and 48(26.7%) were female. On the age of the respondents, 11(6.1%) were between 18-25 yrs, 29(16.1%) were between 26-33yrs, 83(46.1%) were between 34-45yrs, while 57(31.7%) were between 46-65yrs. The respondents educational qualification shows that, 39(21.7%) had primary, 56(31.1%) had secondary, while 85(47.2%) had tertiary education. Regarding their nationality, 173(96.1%) of the respondents were Nigerians, while 7(3.9%) were foreigners. On their marital status, 132(73.3%) of them were married, 37(20.63%) were single, while 11(6.1%) were widow/divorced. The occupation of the respondents show that 5(2.8%) were students, 64(35.6%) were civil servants, while 111 were self-employed. On purpose of visit,

83(46.1%) were for leisure, 67(37.2%) for business, while 11(6.1%) for conferences/seminar and 19(10.6%) visited relatives.

The data collected was analyzed using SPSS statistics 20. Cronbach's Alpha was also used to check the consistency of the intended measure. Table 2 shows the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient's of the constructs with an acceptable level of internal consistency as suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1997). The entire constructs produced acceptable levels of reliability, as pointed out by Hair, Anderson and Tatham (2010), that 0.6 is the minimum acceptable level of Cronbach's Alpha for any construct to acquire an adequate reliability.

**Table 2: Reliability of the Constructs**

<b>Details</b>	<b>Number of items</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>
<b>Tangibility (TAN)</b>		
The front desk was visually appealing. The employees had clean, neat uniforms. The restaurant atmosphere was inviting. The shops were pleasant and attractive. The outdoor surroundings were visually attractive. The hotel was bright and well lighted The hotel's interior and exterior were well maintained The hotel was clean	8	0.991
<b>Reliability (REL)</b>		
My reservation was handled efficiently My guest room was ready as promised TV, telephone, A/C, lights, sockets, showers and sinks worked properly I got what I paid for	4	0.988
<b>Responsiveness (RES)</b>		
Employees responded promptly to my requests Informative literature about the hotel provided Employees were willing to answer my questions Employees responded quickly to solve my problems Room service was prompt	5	0.991

<b>Confidence (CON)</b>		
Employees know about local places of interest Employees treated me with respect Employees were polite when answering my questions The hotel provided a safe environment The facilities were conveniently located	5	0.981
<b>Communication (COM)</b>		
Charges on my account were clearly explained I received undivided attention at the front desk Receptionist tried to find out my particular needs Employees anticipated my needs	4	0.993
<b>Customer Satisfaction (CS)</b>		
I am satisfied with my decision to stay in this hotel. My choice to stay in this hotel is a wise one. I think I did the right thing when I chose to stay in this hotel. I feel that my experience with this hotel has been enjoyable.	4	0.992
<b>Behavioural Intentions (BI)</b>		
I intend to continue visiting this hotel. I consider this hotel as my first choice in the future. I will spread positive word-of-mouth about this hotel. I will recommend this hotel to my friends and others.	4	0.985

The hypothesized relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions were tested with Pearson's Product Moment correlation. The strength of a correlation can be described using the guide suggested by Evans (1996) for the absolute value of r: .00-.19 "very weak", .20-.39 "weak", .40-.59 "moderate", .60-.79 "strong", .80-1.0 "very strong".

**Table 3: Correlations**

		TAN	REL	RES	CON	COM	CS	BI
TANGIBILITY (TAN)	Pearson Correlation	1						
	Sig. (2-tailed)							
	N	180						
RELIABILITY (REL)	Pearson Correlation	.852**	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000						
	N	180	180					
RESPONSIVENESS (RES)	Pearson Correlation	.867**	.985**	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000					
	N	180	180	180				
CONFIDENCE (CON)	Pearson Correlation	.829**	.941**	.917**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000				
	N	180	180	180	180			
COMMUNICATION (COM)	Pearson Correlation	.867**	.985**	1.000**	.917**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000			
	N	180	180	180	180	180		
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION (CS)	Pearson Correlation	.852**	1.000**	.985**	.941**	.985**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		
	N	180	180	180	180	180	180	
BEHAVIOURAL INTENTIONS (BI)	Pearson Correlation	.901**	.945**	.972**	.886**	.972**	.945**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	180	180	180	180	180	180	180

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson correlation result shows the relationship between the dimensions of service quality, customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions shown in table 3. The result shows that the service quality dimensions; tangibility ( $r = .852$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), reliability ( $r = 1.000$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), responsiveness ( $r = .985$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), confidence ( $r = .941$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), communication ( $r = .985$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), had strong relationship with customer satisfaction. The result equally revealed that customer satisfaction had a strong relationship with behavioural intentions ( $r = .945$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). The results show that applying LODGING QUALITY INDEX model to test the service quality on customer satisfaction and the resultant behavioural intentions show that the variables have strong relationships. This means that hotels in the region are effective in their services, which has a great

influence on customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions, such as giving positive reviews, recommendations, repeat visit, and use of Word-of-Mouth (WOM).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of the study show that there is a significant relationship between service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction, and the resulting behavioural intentions. The finding concurs with that of previous studies that there is a strong relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction (Getty & Thompson, 1994; Na, 2010; Bello & Majebi, 2018). In the same vein, the hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions was also confirmed. This result confirms the findings of previous researchers that a satisfied customer is likely to recommend, give positive reviews, positive word of mouth, and repeat visit (Little, 2011; Getty & Thompson, 1994; Kapiki, 2012; Ali, 2015; Moshin & Lockyer, 2010; Bello & Bello, 2016).

Meanwhile, as the number of international visitors to Nigeria continues to grow, coupled with the interest of domestic tourists in leisure tourism that is equally gaining momentum, there is need to do more to keep attracting and retaining these tourists. One of the strategies to achieve this, is an improvement on service quality dimensions by the hotels to satisfy their customers. Despite the positive effect exhibited by the service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction and resulting behavioural intention, efforts should be intensified in improving on the quality of services provided to the visitors. Competition is intense to attract the ever increasing number of international tourist and domestic visitors to improve on the occupancy rate and not just attracting them but retaining them through the continuous provision of improved services.

This study is not without limitations. The major one is that the sample size was not large, selected conveniently and cannot be generalized. The study focused on selected 3-star hotels in Onitsha Business District and Enugu Metropolis, and future studies should be extended to other types of hotels both rated and unrated in the South East region. Besides, hotels and guest houses in rural communities should be studied in order to capture the feelings of other types of tourists that visit rural areas on the quality service dimensions.

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