



SERVICE QUALITY AND VISITORS' BEHAVIOURAL INTENTION IN ECO-TOURISM DESTINATIONS IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT	KEYWORDS
<p>This study examined the relationship between service quality and visitors' behavioural intention at selected eco-tourism destinations in South-South Nigeria, specifically Obudu Mountain Resort, Cross River State, and Finima Nature Park, Rivers State. Anchored on the Expectancy Disconfirmation Paradigm, the study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey design. Three dimensions of service quality (tangibility, responsiveness, and reliability) were examined as predictors of visitors' behavioural intention. A structured questionnaire employing a 4-point Likert scale was administered to a sample of 213 visitors across both destinations, drawn using convenience sampling. Of the questionnaires distributed, 200 were retrieved and analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient via SPSS version 25. Reliability of the instrument was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha, with coefficients ranging from 0.71 to 0.81. Findings revealed significant positive relationships between all three dimensions of service quality and visitors' behavioural intention. Tangibility recorded the strongest association, followed by responsiveness and reliability. The study concludes that enhancing the physical environment, staff responsiveness, and service consistency at eco-tourism sites is essential for sustaining positive visitor behavioural intentions. Recommendations include investment in physical infrastructure, targeted staff training, and robust service delivery frameworks tailored to the eco-tourism context.</p>	<p>Behavioural Intention, Eco-Tourism, Reliability, Responsiveness, Service Quality, South-South Nigeria, Tangibility</p>

Introduction

Eco-tourism has emerged as one of the fastest-growing segments of the global tourism industry, driven by increasing environmental consciousness, a desire for authentic nature-based experiences, and the growing appeal of destinations that combine scenic beauty with biodiversity conservation (Jeong, Kim,

& Yu, 2019). In Nigeria, the South-South geopolitical zone is endowed with exceptional natural assets—from the rugged highland terrain of the Obudu Plateau in Cross River State to the rich coastal mangrove ecosystems of Finima Nature Park on Bonny Island in Rivers State—that position the region as a significant hub for eco-tourism development. Yet, despite their considerable natural endowments, these destinations continue to struggle with visitor retention, weak repeat patronage, and limited positive word-of-mouth promotion, challenges that are widely attributed to deficiencies in service quality (Adebayo & Iweka, 2014).

Service quality occupies a central position in tourism management scholarship, widely recognised as a determinant of visitor satisfaction, loyalty, and future behavioural intentions (Fida, Ahmed, & Al-Balushi, 2020; Rahimizhian, Avci, & Eluwole, 2020). In the eco-tourism context, where visitors arrive with heightened expectations regarding both the natural environment and accompanying hospitality services, the gap between expected and perceived service quality can critically influence whether visitors choose to return or recommend a destination to others (Okocha, Okafor, & Nnama-Okechukwu, 2021). Behavioural intention—encompassing the inclination to revisit and willingness to recommend—has therefore been recognised as a fundamental strategic metric for evaluating the success and competitiveness of tourism destinations (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020; Jeong et al., 2019).

Existing empirical studies have explored service quality and behavioural intention in diverse tourism contexts, including beach tourism (Wilawan, Sridar, & Nut, 2020), hotel settings (Ezeh & Ezeuduji, 2023), and national parks (Mazlina, Ahmad, Sridar, & Herman, 2015). However, studies contextualised within eco-tourism destinations in Nigeria's South-South region remain sparse. The few available Nigerian studies have focused primarily on hotel facilities in urban centres such as Port Harcourt and Enugu (Okocha et al., 2021; Uboegbulam & Ezurume, 2020), leaving a knowledge gap regarding natural, conservation-oriented attractions. This study addresses that gap by simultaneously examining Obudu Mountain Resort and Finima Nature Park—two ecologically distinct but geographically proximate eco-tourism sites—to generate findings applicable to South-South Nigeria's broader eco-tourism landscape.

Specifically, the study aims to:

- i. Determine the relationship between tangibility and visitors' behavioural intention at eco-tourism destinations in South-South Nigeria.
- ii. Examine the relationship between responsiveness and visitors' behavioural intention at eco-tourism destinations in South-South Nigeria.
- iii. Ascertain the relationship between reliability and visitors' behavioural intention at eco-tourism destinations in South-South Nigeria.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Expectancy Disconfirmation Paradigm (EDP), originally proposed by Oliver (1980). The EDP posits that consumers approach service encounters with pre-formed expectations derived from prior experience, word-of-mouth communications, and destination marketing. Following the service encounter, perceived performance is compared against these expectations: when performance matches expectations, confirmation occurs, producing satisfaction;

when performance exceeds expectations, positive disconfirmation results in heightened satisfaction; and when performance falls short, negative disconfirmation produces dissatisfaction (Oliver, 1980).

In the eco-tourism context, this framework is particularly apt because visitors to sites such as Obudu Mountain Resort and Finima Nature Park typically hold vivid pre-visit expectations shaped by promotional materials, conservation narratives, and social media imagery. If the tangible environment, staff responsiveness, and service reliability at these sites fulfil or surpass those expectations, the EDP predicts that visitors will form favourable behavioural intentions—specifically, the inclination to revisit and to recommend the destination to others. Conversely, service deficiencies that generate negative disconfirmation are likely to suppress revisit intention and stimulate negative word-of-mouth. The EDP thus provides a theoretically coherent lens for examining how the three selected dimensions of service quality translate into measurable visitor behavioural intentions across eco-tourism settings in South-South Nigeria.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Service Quality

Service quality is broadly understood as the comparative evaluation that consumers make between their expectations of a service and their perceptions of actual service delivery (Fida et al., 2020). It represents a firm's capacity to meet or exceed the desires and needs of its clientele, and has been widely identified as a foundational determinant of customer satisfaction and repeat patronage across service industries (Rahman, Hossain, & Hossain, 2020). In the tourism and hospitality sector, service quality is especially significant because the intangible, experiential nature of the product means that visitors rely heavily on observable cues—physical environments, staff conduct, and the consistency of service delivery—to form quality judgements (Saleem & Raja, 2014).

The SERVQUAL model, one of the most widely adopted frameworks for measuring service quality, identifies five dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2009). This study focuses on three of these dimensions (tangibility, responsiveness, and reliability) which have been consistently identified in the eco-tourism and nature-based tourism literature as the most salient predictors of visitor satisfaction and behavioural intention (Okocha et al., 2021; Sulemana, Amoah, & Asante, 2023; Wilawan et al., 2020).

3.2 Dimensions of Service Quality

3.2.1 Tangibility

Tangibility refers to the physical and observable aspects of service delivery, encompassing the appearance of facilities, equipment, personnel presentation, and communication materials (Anwar & Balcioglu, 2016). In eco-tourism destinations, tangibility extends beyond conventional hotel aesthetics to include the maintenance of natural features, trail infrastructure, interpretive signage, waste management systems, and the overall environmental cleanliness of the site (Sulemana et al., 2023). Yun Ji (2013) identifies three components of the tangible environment: design factors, social factors, and ambient factors; all of which contribute to the visitor's holistic quality perception.

Research has consistently demonstrated that tangibility is among the most influential service quality dimensions in shaping visitor satisfaction and behavioural intentions at tourism destinations. Sulemana et al. (2023) found that tangibility significantly predicted visitor loyalty in Ghanaian hotels, while Wilawan et al. (2020) confirmed its influence on international tourists' revisit intentions at Malaysian beach destinations. For eco-tourism sites, where the physical environment is simultaneously the primary product and the setting for service delivery, the quality and maintenance of tangible elements are particularly consequential for visitor perceptions.

3.2.2 Responsiveness

Responsiveness denotes an organisation's willingness and capacity to provide prompt, helpful service and to address visitor needs, inquiries, and complaints in a timely and effective manner (Anwar & Qadir, 2017). It encompasses the accessibility and attentiveness of frontline staff, the speed of issue resolution, and the flexibility of service provision to accommodate diverse visitor requirements. In eco-tourism settings, responsiveness is critical because visitors frequently encounter novel environmental contexts that generate questions and occasionally safety concerns requiring immediate staff attention. Okocha et al. (2021) reported strong positive relationships between responsiveness and customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions at three-star hotels in South-East Nigeria, while Wilawan et al. (2020) identified responsiveness as one of three significant factors shaping international tourists' service quality perceptions and revisit intentions at Langkawi Island, Malaysia. Ezeh and Ezeuduji (2023) further confirmed that responsiveness influences guest satisfaction and, through satisfaction, guest loyalty in low-cost hotel contexts—findings that underscore the cross-contextual relevance of this dimension.

3.2.3 Reliability

Reliability refers to a service provider's ability to deliver promised services consistently, accurately, and dependably (Anwar & Climis, 2017). It includes honouring service commitments, maintaining consistent quality standards across encounters, and ensuring service availability as advertised. In the eco-tourism context, reliability encompasses the dependable operation of guided tours, transportation, accommodation, interpretive programmes, and safety protocols, which are elements that significantly shape visitors' overall experience quality and trust in the destination (Hameed & Anwar, 2018). Ezeh and Ezeuduji (2023) found that reliability was a significant predictor of guest satisfaction and loyalty in Nigerian hotels. Edna and Oda (2022) demonstrated positive associations between service quality reliability, visitor satisfaction, and revisit intention in Indonesian travel contexts. Mazlina et al. (2015) similarly reported that reliable destination attributes increased the probability of positive memorable tourism experiences and revisit intentions at Mulu National Park, Malaysia. These findings collectively underscore reliability's role as a foundational dimension of service quality with direct implications for visitor behavioural intentions.

3.3 Visitors' Behavioural Intention

Visitors' behavioural intention refers to the anticipated actions or decisions that visitors plan to undertake as a result of their overall experience at a destination (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020). It is a composite construct that integrates cognitive evaluations, affective responses, and conative predispositions formed during and after the tourism encounter. Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler (2009) define favourable behavioural intentions as including positive word-of-mouth, willingness to pay a premium, repeat patronage, and brand loyalty, all of which contribute to the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of tourism destinations.

In eco-tourism research, behavioural intention is most commonly operationalised through two primary measures: intention to revisit and willingness to recommend (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Jeong et al., 2019). Intention to revisit reflects visitors' readiness to return to the same destination based on the satisfaction derived from prior experience, and is widely regarded as a key indicator of destination loyalty (Choo, Ahn, & Petrick, 2015; Eid, El-Kassrawy, & Agag, 2019). Willingness to recommend, often conceptualised as positive word-of-mouth, captures visitors' propensity to advocate for the destination among their social networks, and constitutes one of the most cost-effective and credible channels of destination marketing available to eco-tourism operators (Moliner-Velazquez, Ruiz-Molina, & Fayos-Gardo, 2020).

For the purposes of this study, both dimensions are treated as a unified dependent construct—visitors' behavioural intention—reflecting the integrated, forward-looking orientation of post-visit attitudes toward eco-tourism destinations in South-South Nigeria.

3.4 Study Sites

Obudu Mountain Resort, located on the Obudu Plateau in Cross River State at an altitude of approximately 1,576 metres above sea level, is one of Nigeria's premier eco-tourism attractions. It offers a diverse range of activities including hiking, cable car rides, bird watching, and golf, set against panoramic highland scenery. The resort's cool micro-climate is a rare in tropical West Africa and has historically been a major draw for domestic and international visitors seeking respite from urban heat.

Finima Nature Park, situated on Bonny Island in Rivers State, is Nigeria's first designated nature park and is significant for its rich mangrove and rainforest biodiversity, including primate populations and diverse avifauna. Jointly, these two sites represent the ecological and topographical diversity of South-South Nigeria's eco-tourism offering, and their inclusion in a single study enables comparative and aggregate analysis of service quality-behavioural intention dynamics across distinct natural tourism environments.

3.5 Empirical Review and Hypotheses Development

A substantial body of empirical literature supports positive associations between service quality dimensions and visitor behavioural intentions across tourism contexts. Sulemana et al. (2023) found that tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy significantly predicted visitor loyalty in Ghanaian hotels. Wilawan et al. (2020) confirmed that tangibility, assurance, and

responsiveness shaped international tourists' service quality perceptions and revisit intentions in Malaysia. Okocha et al. (2021) reported that all five SERVQUAL dimensions were positively associated with customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions at Nigerian hotels. Uboegbulam and Ezurume (2020) demonstrated that service quality significantly and positively predicted guest revisit intention in Port Harcourt hotels. Ezeh and Ezeuduji (2023) showed that reliability and responsiveness influenced guest satisfaction and loyalty at Nigerian low-cost hotels.

In national park and eco-tourism contexts, Mazlina et al. (2015) established that perceived destination attributes—including service-related factors—drove positive memorable experiences and revisit intentions at Mulu National Park, while Boro (2022) confirmed that SERVQUAL dimensions significantly predicted tourist satisfaction and revisit intention at a popular North-East Indian destination. Edna and Oda (2022) further demonstrated that service quality positively influenced revisit intention and word-of-mouth through visitor satisfaction in Indonesian tourism settings. Taken together, these studies provide robust justification for the hypothesised relationships in the present study.

The following null hypotheses are therefore formulated:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between tangibility and visitors' behavioural intention at eco-tourism destinations in South-South Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between responsiveness and visitors' behavioural intention at eco-tourism destinations in South-South Nigeria.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between reliability and visitors' behavioural intention at eco-tourism destinations in South-South Nigeria.

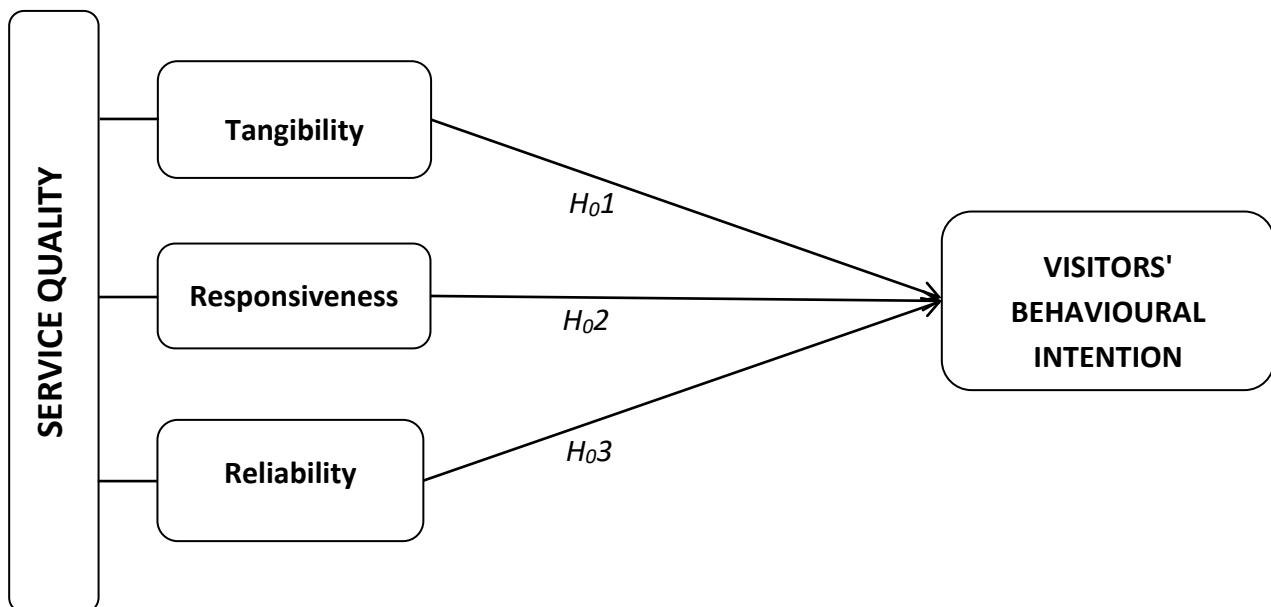


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

Service Quality (Tangibility; Responsiveness; Reliability) → Visitors' Behavioural Intention

4. Methodology

A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was adopted for this study. The target population comprised visitors to Obudu Mountain Resort in Cross River State and Finima Nature Park in Rivers State. Given the transient and variable nature of visitor populations at both sites, the population size was treated as large and unknown. The Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula for large and unknown populations was applied to determine a combined sample size of 213 visitors across both sites. A convenience sampling technique was employed, given that not all visitors present during data collection were willing or able to participate.

Data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire divided into two sections. Section A captured socio-demographic characteristics, while Section B contained 20 Likert-scale items (1 = Strongly Disagree to 4 = Strongly Agree) measuring the three service quality dimensions and the composite visitors' behavioural intention variable. Items for each construct were adapted from validated instruments in the extant literature (Sulemana et al., 2023; Wilawan et al., 2020; Ezeh & Ezeuduji, 2023) and modified to suit the eco-tourism context. Content and face validity were established through review by academic experts in tourism management. Instrument reliability was confirmed via Cronbach's Alpha: tangibility ($\alpha = 0.77$), responsiveness ($\alpha = 0.79$), reliability ($\alpha = 0.71$), and visitors' behavioural intention ($\alpha = 0.82$), all meeting the acceptable threshold of 0.70.

Of the 213 questionnaires administered, 200 were retrieved and found complete, yielding a usable response rate of 93.9%. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient via SPSS version 25. The composite visitors' behavioural intention score was derived by averaging the intention-to-revisit and willingness-to-recommend subscale scores for each respondent. Hypotheses were tested at a 5% level of significance ($p < 0.05$).

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic analysis of the 200 usable responses revealed that female visitors constituted the majority of respondents (58%), consistent with the predominantly leisure-oriented visitor profile of eco-tourism destinations. The largest age cohort was 21–30 years (44%), followed by 31–40 years (22%) and visitors above 40 years (20%), reflecting the appeal of active outdoor tourism to younger adults. In terms of educational attainment, tertiary-educated respondents were the most prevalent (39%), followed by those with secondary education (24%) and primary education (22%). Regarding marital status, married respondents formed the largest group (42%), followed by single visitors (31%) and widowed visitors (20%). These demographic characteristics of a predominantly young, educated, and female visitor base, are broadly consistent with the visitor profile reported for eco-tourism and nature-based destinations in sub-Saharan Africa (Jeong et al., 2019).

5.2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were computed for all constructs using a criterion mean of 2.5. All variables recorded grand means exceeding the criterion, indicating positive visitor perceptions across service quality dimensions and behavioural intention. Tangibility recorded a grand mean of 2.98 (SD = 0.77), reflecting moderate satisfaction with the physical environment across both sites, though with noted variability in facility maintenance and signage quality. Responsiveness yielded a grand mean of 3.05 (SD = 0.78), indicating generally positive perceptions of staff attentiveness and communication. Reliability recorded the highest grand mean among the service quality dimensions (3.12, SD = 0.80), suggesting that consistent service delivery was perceived as a comparative strength at both destinations. The composite visitors' behavioural intention variable recorded a grand mean of 3.08 (SD = 0.78), reflecting a generally positive inclination toward revisiting and recommending the eco-tourism sites.

Table 1: Summary of Descriptive Statistics (N = 200)

Variable	Grand Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
Tangibility	2.98	0.77	Accept
Responsiveness	3.05	0.78	Accept
Reliability	3.12	0.80	Accept
Visitors' Behavioural Intention	3.08	0.78	Accept

Criterion mean = 2.5

5.3 Hypotheses Testing

5.3.1 Hypothesis One: Tangibility and Visitors' Behavioural Intention

Table 2: Correlation Analysis for Tangibility and Visitors' Behavioural Intention

	Tangibility	Visitors' Behavioural Intention
Tangibility	1	0.521**
Visitors' Behavioural Intention	0.521**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
N	200	200

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). *Source: Field Survey, 2026.*

Table 2 reveals a positive and moderate correlation between tangibility and visitors' behavioural intention ($r = 0.521, p = 0.000 < 0.05$). H01 is accordingly rejected. This finding indicates that improvements in the physical environment—encompassing facility maintenance, attractive

landscaping, adequate visitor infrastructure, and clear interpretive signage—are significantly associated with enhanced visitor inclinations to return and recommend the eco-tourism destinations. The result aligns with Sulemana et al. (2023), who found that tangibility significantly predicted visitor loyalty in Ghanaian hotels, and with Wilawan et al. (2020), who confirmed tangibility's influence on international tourist revisit intentions at Malaysian beach destinations. In the eco-tourism context, this finding carries particular weight: at both Obudu Mountain Resort and Finima Nature Park, the natural environment itself constitutes the primary tangible offering, meaning that ecological integrity, infrastructure upkeep, and visitor facility quality are inseparable from service quality perceptions. The result echoes Boro (2022), who demonstrated that SERVQUAL tangibility attributes were critical for tourist satisfaction and revisit intention at an Indian eco-tourism destination. These converging findings confirm that the physical dimension of service quality is a pivotal driver of favourable visitor behavioural intentions in eco-tourism settings.

5.3.2 Hypothesis Two: Responsiveness and Visitors' Behavioural Intention

Table 3: Correlation Analysis for Responsiveness and Visitors' Behavioural Intention

	Responsiveness	Visitors' Behavioural Intention
Responsiveness	1	0.471**
Visitors' Behavioural Intention	0.471**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
N	200	200

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 shows a positive and moderate correlation between responsiveness and visitors' behavioural intention ($r = 0.471$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$), leading to the rejection of H02. This result indicates that the promptness, helpfulness, and communicative effectiveness of staff at eco-tourism sites are significantly associated with visitors' intentions to return and to advocate for the destination. The finding is consistent with Okocha et al. (2021), who reported strong positive associations between responsiveness and both customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions at Nigerian hotels. Wilawan et al. (2020) similarly identified responsiveness as one of three key factors shaping international tourists' service quality perceptions and revisit intentions. In eco-tourism contexts, responsive staff performance is especially salient because visitors often navigate unfamiliar natural environments and require reliable guidance, safety assurance, and real-time information—needs that, when met promptly and competently, substantially elevate the perceived quality of the tourism experience. The finding also resonates with Ezech and Ezeuduji (2023), who demonstrated that responsiveness influenced satisfaction and, through satisfaction, visitor loyalty at Nigerian hotels, reinforcing the argument that interpersonal service responsiveness is a consistent and cross-contextual driver of positive visitor outcomes.

5.3.3 Hypothesis Three: Reliability and Visitors' Behavioural Intention

Table 4: Correlation Analysis for Reliability and Visitors' Behavioural Intention

	Reliability	Visitors' Behavioural Intention
Reliability	1	0.464**
Visitors' Behavioural Intention	0.464**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
N	200	200

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 presents a positive and moderate correlation between reliability and visitors' behavioural intention ($r = 0.464$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$), resulting in the rejection of H03. These findings indicate that consistent, promise-keeping, and dependable service delivery is significantly associated with visitors' inclinations to revisit and recommend the eco-tourism destinations. The result aligns with Ezeh and Ezeuduji (2023), who established reliability as a significant predictor of guest satisfaction and loyalty in Nigerian hotels. Edna and Oda (2022) similarly demonstrated positive relationships between service reliability, visitor satisfaction, and revisit intention in Indonesian travel contexts. Mazlina et al. (2015) reported that reliable destination attributes drove positive memorable experiences and revisit intentions at Mulu National Park, underscoring the particular importance of this dimension in nature-based tourism settings where logistical unpredictability—arising from weather, access challenges, or equipment failures—can acutely disrupt visitor expectations. At South-South Nigerian eco-tourism sites, which contend with infrastructural limitations and periodic access challenges, building a reputation for reliable, consistent service delivery is therefore critical for converting first-time visitors into repeat patrons and destination advocates.

5.4 Summary of Hypotheses Testing

Table 5: Summary of Hypotheses Testing Results

Hypothesis	Predictor	r	p-value	Decision
H01	Tangibility → Behavioural Intention	0.521	0.000	Rejected
H02	Responsiveness → Behavioural Intention	0.471	0.000	Rejected
H03	Reliability → Behavioural Intention	0.464	0.000	Rejected

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the relationship between service quality, operationalised through tangibility, responsiveness, and reliability, and visitors' behavioural intention at eco-tourism destinations in South-South Nigeria, with specific reference to Obudu Mountain Resort and Finima Nature Park. All three hypotheses were rejected at $p < 0.05$, confirming that each service quality dimension shares a significant positive relationship with visitors' behavioural intention. Tangibility recorded the strongest association ($r = 0.521$), followed by responsiveness ($r = 0.471$) and reliability ($r = 0.464$). These findings validate the Expectancy Disconfirmation Paradigm as an explanatory framework: when service encounters at eco-tourism destinations meet or exceed visitor expectations across physical, interactional, and consistency-related dimensions, visitors develop favourable intentions to return and to advocate for the destination.

The results carry important implications for eco-tourism management in South-South Nigeria. First, destination managers should prioritise sustained investment in the physical infrastructure of eco-tourism sites, including trail maintenance, facility upgrades, environmental hygiene, and interpretive communication materials. Given that tangibility exerted the strongest influence on behavioural intention, improvements in the visible, experiential environment of both Obudu Mountain Resort and Finima Nature Park are likely to yield the most immediate returns in visitor retention and positive word-of-mouth. Second, structured and ongoing staff training programmes focused on communication, visitor orientation, and prompt issue resolution are essential for enhancing perceived responsiveness. Frontline staff at eco-tourism sites serve as primary touchpoints in the visitor experience; their attentiveness and competence are inseparable from visitors' overall quality judgements. Third, operational systems that ensure service consistency, including standardised tour schedules, reliable transportation, and clear, kept service commitments, should be institutionalised to strengthen visitor trust and perceived reliability.

At the policy level, tourism development agencies in Cross River and Rivers States should establish service quality benchmarking frameworks for eco-tourism operators, incorporating standards for physical infrastructure, staff performance, and service consistency. Public-private partnerships that facilitate infrastructure financing for natural tourism sites, coupled with hospitality skills development programmes for local guides and site staff, could significantly enhance the service quality proposition of South-South Nigeria's eco-tourism destinations.

Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to track changes in visitor perceptions and behavioural intentions as service quality investments materialise over time. Comparative studies across additional eco-tourism sites in the South-South region and across other geopolitical zones would enhance the generalisability of these findings. Qualitative approaches, including visitor exit interviews and ethnographic observation, could yield richer insights into the experiential mechanisms through which service quality perceptions are formed at nature-based destinations. Researchers may also consider incorporating additional SERVQUAL dimensions, particularly assurance and empathy, and mediating variables such as visitor satisfaction and destination image, to develop more comprehensive models of behavioural intention in the eco-tourism context.

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