

# Airline Service Quality And Passengers' Behavioural Intentions In Rivers State, Nigeria.

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**Abstract :** This study was carried out primarily to investigate the effect of airline service quality on passengers' behaviour intentions in domestic airlines in Nigeria. Tangibility and Reliability were the two dimensions of airline service quality adopted for the study. Descriptive and casual research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was large and unknown consequently, the sample size of 246 determined using Cochran formula for sample size determination from an infinite population. Primary data was utilized in the study primary data were collected with a well-structured questionnaire and administered to airline passengers who patronised domestic airlines. The statistical tools for data analyses was multiple regression analysis. Major findings shows that all the dimensions of airline service quality had positive significant relationship with passenger behavioural intentions. The study concluded that airline service quality constituent an important determinant of passengers behavioural intentions in the airline industry. It was recommended that airline owners/managers of airlines should adopt various strategic innovative, proactive and competitive measures based on airline service quality in line with the findings of this study. This is with a view to repositioning their respective airline brands for profitable passengers' behavioural intentions in the competitive global tourism market.

**Keywords:** Airline service quality. Tangibility. Reliability. Brand Loyalty. Repurchase intentions

## Introduction

Perdue (2002) posited that as a result of globalization and changes in tourists' expectations and preferences, there is an intensive competition that characterize the global tourism industry. This has placed a demand on tourism service providers/marketers to seek ways through market research to understand the target market's needs and expectations. The resulting knowledge helps in the development of tourism marketing strategies that are customer centric in nature and capable of delivering customer value to the target market and be in a position to capture value in return (Kotler, 2001). In the tourism industry, the creation and delivery of customer value manifest through memorable touristic experiences which accounts for the gaining of competitive advantage by tourism service providers.

It is in the light of the foregoing, that Rather (2018) suggested that the ability of marketing organisations to create excellent customer experiences in the contemporary tourism industry is the main source of effective differentiation strategy which stimulates competitive advantage as it generates valuable customer relationships. With tourism product being composite in nature, it is expected that each component of tourism such as transportation (airlines, taxis, boats), food and beverage, entertainment, accommodation (hotels, Quick Service Restaurants, etc.), travel intermediaries (travel agencies and tour operators), visitor attractions, etc., should create and deliver customer experiences that will combine to produce a memorable touristic experience.

In the competing world, all service organisations (airline, car rentals, travel trade, hotels, Quick Service Restaurants, etc) can achieve differentiation which could be perceived by the customers through evaluation of service quality. Customers are able to do this because they separate the quality of services. As posited by Berry et al., (1988, p.35) "competing service businesses may look alike, but they do not feel alike". The quest to deliver high-quality service to customers remains a key strategic initiative to survive in today's competitive service industries such as airline transportation services (Zeithaml et al., 1996). When service is properly managed to the satisfaction of customers in a service environment such as it could assist airline service brands to enhance positive behavioural intentions such as positive word of mouth communication, repeat purchase, and brand loyalty. Manifestations such as these could assist service organisations to gain competitive advantage.

The aviation sector where airlines operate has become very important segment the experienced based tourism industry where its operations contributes greatly to the economic development of a destinations such as Nigeria. The operations of the travel industry it adds value to the touristic experience of tourists and thus demands the development and delivery of a robust service quality considering the lifestyle and needs of the target market that make use of their services. Airline operators that are market oriented and desirous of achieving competitive advantage should therefore create a service environment that promotes service quality delivery as an acceptable organisation-wide marketing strategy. As noted by Archana and Subha, (2012), the challenging nature of the airline

transportation market, several airlines are focusing of airline service quality to enhance passenger satisfaction because of the fact that service quality conditions promotes an organisation's competitive advantage through the retention of customer patronage and the resulting market share.

Empirical evidence suggest that to achieve success in the development of customer-focused service marketing strategy requires a deep understanding of the target customer needs, preferences and expectations. In addition, the service marketing strategies to developed and implemented by airlines with the aim of using same to expand expand internationally must take cognizance of the different expectations and perceptions of passengers (Aksoy et al., 2003). A number of studies in extant literature have reported results of service quality measurement in various market contexts. Examples include Turkish Air Lines (Aksoy et al., 2003; Aydrin & Yudin, 2012; Pakdil & Aydın, 2007), Jordan (Jahmani, 2017), India (Archana & Subha, 2012), Egypt (Abdel, 2018). There seems to no enough useful information regarding airline research in the context of Nigeria in terms of the influence of airline service quality by domestic airline firms in Nigeria. This current study is intended to bridge this gap in literature as it sought to determine the effect of airline service quality on passengers' behavioural intentions in the domestic airline segment of Nigerian aviation market segment. The study examined the effect of only two dimensions of service quality (tangibility and reliability) on the passengers' behavioural intentions.

## Literature Review

### Conceptual Review

#### Airline Service Quality

Service quality is a measure of the difference between the service delivered by the service organisation and the expectations of the customers. Put differently, how well does the service level which is delivered by the service firm match the service expectations of the target audience/customers. Apparently, the quest to deliver an acceptable level of service quality level to customers is determined by the ability to conform to customer expectations consistently (Parasuraman et al., 1985). Inability to meet the service level expectations of the target audience will lead to customer dissatisfaction. Based on the forgoing, airline service quality could be defined as a composite of various/discrete interactions between airlines and passengers, with service employees seeking to influence customers' perceptions and the image of the carriers (Gursoy et al., 2005; Ishaq, 2012). Based on input from focus groups SERVQUAL was developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) as a generic research instrument to measure service quality. It consist of five factors (tangibles, reliability, assurance, responsiveness, and empathy) and made up of a two-part, 22 scale items with regard to expectations and performance. In this current study only tangibility and reliability are tested.

**Tangibility:** Tangibility describes the physical structure/physical facilities owned by a service organisation. Organisational building structure, and its facilities include its equipment, communication materials and appearance of personnel. For a hotel, its building (the physical structure) is what embellishes the hotel and makes it look very attractive and homely to the guest. Also, the serene environment of a particular hotel equally represents its physical structure. Other elements of physical structure includes the room cleanliness, cleanliness of other parts of the hotel environment including the bar, restaurants and proper employee uniform (Abdullah, et al. 2017).

For an airline, the aircraft's physical facilities includes seat space, seat comfort and legroom, appearance of the employees, in-flight entertainment services, airport services handling, and communications materials.

**Reliability:** Reliability as a dimension of service quality describes the ability of a service organisations to perform the service promised the target market through marketing communicating channels dependably and accurately. For example, when an airline service brand strives to ensure that their organisation has an outstanding track record of punctuality, the organisation is manifesting how reliable they are. Reliability also signals the airline employees' ability and its operational system to enhance the performance of its responsibilities and maintain high level functionality in routine operations and unexpected circumstances such as convenience reservation, punctuality based on pre-determined schedules, efficiency of the check-in procedures, and accuracy ticketing practice.

#### Passengers' Behavioural Intentions

How the target market respond towards organisational brand offerings in the marketplace is described as customers' behavioural intentions. This apparent act of behaviour depends on several marketing factors such as benefits derivable from the products/service, the quality of service delivered, etc. Accordingly therefore, such behavioural response towards organisational market offering could either be favourable/positive or unfavourable/negative (Ladhari, 2009; Zeithaml, et al, 1996). Whether positive or negative is dependent on the perception of the of the consumer of consumption of the product(goods/services). It therefore represents a very clear signal to the marketing managers whether a customer will like to continue to patronise the brand or brand switch (i.e. patronise

a competing brand (Alexandris, Zahariadis, Tsorbatzoudis, & Grouios, 2004; Kang, James, & Alexandris, 2002). Therefore, the manifestation of the behavioural intentions of customers of a particular brand could be seen via positive word of mouth communication or negative word of mouth communication, repurchase intentions, and brand loyalty(positive) decision to pay premium price or inability to accept premium price and brand switching behaviour. In this current study, passenger loyalty, repeat patronage and positive word of mouth communications were the latent variables for passengers' behavioural intentions.

## Theoretical Review

**Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Theory:** The theory underpinning this current study is the stimulus-organism-response (SOR) theory which was propounded by Mehrabian and Russell (1974). The theory is premised on the fact that people (organisms) are usually stimulated by several factors (stimulus) before they could perform certain behaviours (response). The basic or primary assumption of SOR theory is the fact that the behaviour (or response) of organisms (O) can really be influenced and conditioned by a stimulus (S) within the particular environment surrounding the individual. This implication is the responses of individuals to a particular phenomenon can be determined/influenced by external cues that actually surround the environment where the individual is. The basic assumption of the stimulus-organism-response theory is best summarized by Feng et al. (2020, p. 176), who maintained that "the stimulus organism response theory states that there is a stimulus which triggers a response based on the internal feelings or behaviour of an organism (person). This internal processing of the stimulus can be conscious or unconscious, and it further triggers an emotion that leads to a response.

The resulting response can be internal, like an increased heart rate, or external, like crying. The foregoing suggests an environmental stimulus has the capacity to trigger a positive or negative response from individuals. This response could either be internally or externally, which is why scholars are of the view that environmental stimuli like service experience, entertainment experience, service quality can influence consumers' purchase behaviour (Wirth, et al, 2012; Rieger, et al, 2014; Sit & Merrilees, 2002; Manhas, & Tukamushaba, 2015; Pijls, et al, 2017; Spielmann, et al, 2012; Ali, et al 2016; Ng, et al 2011) in the marketplace.

In the context of this current study which sought to determine the effect of airline service quality on passenger behavioural intentions the relevance of the stimulus-organism-response theory is embedded in its basic assumption/premise, which suggests that service quality dimensions of an airline service can influence or stimulate positive passenger responses towards the overall service environment and brand experience of an airline service. For example, tangibilising of airline service through clean aircraft, good toilets, nice personnel dress code, that stimulates the environment and other service quality measures that have the capacity to excite airline passengers can constitute the stimulus (S). In this case, airline passengers are regarded as the organisms (O), while the passengers' behavioural responses towards the airlines can be regarded as the response (R). According to the precept of the theory, it can be deduced that if experiential value (S) of airlines are attractive, and comfortable, then the experiences (R) of airline passengers (O) will be positive. Also, if air passengers' experiences are positive, then it is right for them to have a satisfied behaviour towards domestic airlines and develop the likelihood to patronize their services repeatedly.

## Empirical Review

### Airline Service Quality and Airline Passengers' Behavioural Intentions

In Jordan, Jahmani, (2017) through a modified version of SERVQUAL investigated the how the Royal Jordanian airline service quality affected passengers' satisfaction with the relevant of service quality dimensions. The statistical results using Multiple regression analysis showed that all service quality dimensions had a positive relationship on passengers' satisfaction.

In a comparative study carried out in Turkey, Gwes, Arslan and Yilmaz (2011) found that 'assurance' was ranked as the most important service quality dimension by domestic passengers while by international flight passengers ranked 'reliability' as the most important dimension. In Thailand Somwang (2008) found that the passengers' expectations of Thai passengers in their low cost carrier market segment on service quality were higher than their expectations.

In the telecommunication sector of Pakistan, Ishaq (2012) found that service quality and customer perceived value had significant and positive relationship with customer loyalty. Corporate image had insignificant relationship with customer loyalty, while service quality had stronger influence on customer loyalty than customer perceived value.

In Europe, Korda and Snoj (2010) found that customer perceived value mediated the relationship between perceived quality and customer satisfaction in retail banking setting. In Pakistan, Raza, Siddiquei, Awan and Bukhari (2012) found that all the dimensions of perceived value were significantly dependent with service quality dimensions, while perceived value was found to be a significant determinant of customer satisfaction.

With a data set generated from Korean international air passengers, Park, et al (2004) investigated service value, service perception, service expectation, passenger satisfaction, airline image, and behavioural intentions using the same model. The aim of the study was to determine factors that affect the air passengers' decision making process. The results from statistical analysis indicated that passenger satisfaction, service value, and airline image had direct effect on the air passengers' decision-making processes.

In a comparative study focusing on three airlines (Virgin Atlantic, Med-view and British airways) Adekunle, (2019), investigated the influence of service quality on passenger satisfaction in Nigeria. among three airlines. The data set were collected from passengers who ply the lucrative Lagos to London route/flights. The statistical analysis showed that the international passengers ranked the three airlines in this order: Virgin Atlantic services (first); British airways services (second) and Med-view airline services (third). The variables or service attributes considered by the international passengers as being more important were: safety and security, communication skills, flight attendant's courteousness, attitude and uniform of employees, appealing appearance, and staff behaviour.

In the commercial banking sector of Nigeria, Obananya (2020) studied service quality and customers' loyalty. The statistical findings revealed that tangibility and reliability had significant influence on customer loyalty, while assurance had a significant influence on customer loyalty. On the other hand, responsiveness had a significant influence on customer satisfaction.

In the hospitality sector within Ibadan metropolis, Oyo State, Nigeria, Apata, Afolabi, Ajayi, Abimbola, Adebayo, and Okhiria, (2019) examined the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty in hotels. The statistical results revealed service quality had overall statistically significant correlation service with overall loyalty, price insensitivity and repeat patronage.

Bayad, Bayar, Baban, Shahla, Nechirwan, Pshdar, Hassan, Bawan, Sarhang, and Govand, (2021) studied the effect hotel service quality has on customer/guest satisfaction. Their results showed that out of the five dimensions of service quality four (responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibility) had positive relationship with customer satisfaction. On the other hand, reliability had negative relationship with customer satisfaction.

In Abeokuta metropolis, Ogun State, Nigeria, Ogungbayi, Olatidoye, and Agbebi, (2019) examined the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in some selected hotels. Their results showed that the dimensions of service quality had significant relationship with customer satisfaction. The study confirmed that the process of service quality delivery to guests was one of the major challenges facing hotels in Abeokuta metropolis.

In Turkey, Aydin and Yildirim, (2012) investigated the difference between service quality expectations of passengers and perceptions of service quality in different airline firms. The results showed that tangibles, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and empathy were the dimensions considered important for different airline passengers. However, safety was considered as a more important factor as well. Further results showed that customers of THY airline, considered 'price' as the most important factor in order of preference to other domestic airline.

In South Africa, Cambel and Yiar-Ellis (2012) found that for domestic passengers in the airline industry safety was considered as the most important attribute followed by punctuality/reliable flights and then low price. Further interesting findings showed that airline passengers were ready to sacrifice Voyager Miles, onboard space and legroom for lower prices. Chen (2008) found in Taiwan that perceived performance had significant positive effect on perceived value, and not on satisfaction; perceived value had positive significant effect on satisfaction. On the other hand, perceived value had stronger effect than overall satisfaction on behavioural intentions.

From the foregoing, the following hypothesised relationships were developed in their null structures;

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Tangibility does not have significant effect on passengers' behavioural intentions towards domestic airlines in Rivers State, Nigeria.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** Reliability does not have significant effect on passengers' behavioural intentions towards domestic airlines in Rivers State, Nigeria.

## Research Methodology

Basically, descriptive and causal research designs were adopted for this empirical study. It is descriptive because this current research involves collection of data that deal with attitude, preference, behaviour and perception of customers of domestic airlines in Nigeria. The main objective of this study was to assess the effect of airline service quality on passengers' behavioural intentions towards domestic airlines in Nigeria. The most suitable population of the present study included all passengers of domestic airlines in Nigeria. Due to the fact that there was no accurate passengers' database, the total number of passengers that patronized these domestic airlines was considered unknown thereby making this population infinite (infinite population). In this case the researcher adopted the Freud and Williams (1992) formula to determine the sample size.

$$n = \frac{Z^2(pq)}{e^2}$$

where:

n = Sample size sought

z = Standard deviation for desired confidence value

p = Probability or percentage of positive responses

q = Probability or percentage of negative responses

e = Level of significance

n = unknown, z = 1.96, p = 0.80, q = 0.20, e = 0.05

$$n = \frac{1.96^2(0.80 \times 0.20)}{0.05^2}$$

$$n = \frac{3.8416 (0.16)}{0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{0.614656}{0.0025}$$

$$= 245.86 \cong 246$$

Therefore, the researcher administered 246 copies of the questionnaire to the airline passengers that were involved in data collection for this research. The sample consisted of airline passengers who patronised domestic airlines. They were sampled physically and through online channels.

For the purpose of this research, primary data was most appropriate due to the fact that it has considerable advantages. Self-administered questionnaire (Saunders et al., 2009) was the principal instrument used for data collection. The instrument used in this study is a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into four (4) sections (section A-D) containing twenty (20) items questions in all. Section A had six (6) questions on the demographics characteristics of the participating passengers of domestic airline in Nigeria. In section B-F, fourteen (14) items making it four (4) items each for the two dimensions of service quality (tangibility and reliability). In section D, passenger behavioural intentions had six (6) items. A 5-point Likert measurement scale was used in weighting the responses.

For the questionnaire in this study, all the variables (tangibility, reliability and passenger behavioural intentions) were measured using ordinal scale; using a 5-point Likert scale format (5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Undecided, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree). The Likert-type scale of measuring variables was chosen because it is easy to construct; takes much less time; is considered more reliable as under it respondents answer each statement included in the questionnaire; and it allows use of statements that may not have a direct relationship to the attitude being studied (Kothari, 2010).

In this study, airline service quality is the predictor variable which was operationalized using tangibility and reliability (adapted from Jahmani, 2017). The dependent variable of passenger behavioural intentions was measured in terms of passenger loyalty, repeat patronage and positive word of mouth communications (adapted from Wu et al., 2011).

To establish validity of the instrument, drafted copies of the questionnaire were submitted to the supervisor and the researcher also sought opinions of experts in the field of study. Reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach Alpha test with a threshold of 0.7. This facilitated the necessary revision and modification of the research instrument. Nunnally (1978) provided and accepted 0.70 benchmark for measuring instruments using Cronbach Alpha.

The result of the reliability analysis carried out after the main field work is shown in Tables 1A and 1B respectively.



**Table 1A: Reliability Statistics**

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.899	.879	14

**Table 1B: Composite Reliability Analysis**

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Tangibility	.867
Reliability	.782
Passenger Behavioural Intentions	.876

Table 1A and Table 1B above shows the results of reliability analysis for the 14 items instrument and that of the individual constructs respectively using Cronbach's Alpha. The implication of the information in Table 1A and 1B indicates internal consistency as the Chronbach's Alpha on all variables were greater than 0.7. It is therefore concluded that the measurement scales are reliable and the data thereof suitable for analysis

This study was aimed at examining the effect of airline service quality on passengers' behavioural intentions in Rivers State. Based on this, subjecting the stated hypothesised relationships required analyses which was carried out using Multiple Regression Analysis and assisted by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0. Multiple Regression Analysis.

## Research Results

### Analysis of Questionnaire

Table 2 and 3 below are used to analyse the questionnaire in terms of distribution and demographic profile of respondents respectively.

**Table 2 Questionnaire Distribution and Retrieval**

Questionnaire	Frequency	Percent
Distributed	246	100%
Not retrieved	51	20.73 %
Retrieved	195	79.27 %
Useful response	195	79.27%
Not used	-	NIL

Two hundred and forty three questionnaires (246) representing (100%) were administered, One hundred and ninety five (195) copies (79.27%) were retrieved while 51 copies (20.73%) were not retrieved. The one hundred and ninety five (195) copies representing 80.25% were all useful and therefore used for statistical analysis. Data collected from respondents were statistically treated as indicated on the table below:

**Table 3 Demographic profile of respondents**

S/No	Demographic variables	No	Percent
1	<b>Gender</b>		
	Male	88	45.13
	Female	107	54.87
	Total	195	100.00
2	<b>Age</b>		
	< 20 years	34	17.44
	20 – 29 years	56	28.72
	30 – 39 years	90	46.15
	> 40 years	15	7.69
	Total	195	100.00
3	<b>Highest Education Qualification</b>		
	FSCL	19	9.7
	SSCE/GCC	26	13.33
	HND/B.Sc	65	33.33
	MA/M.Sc/MBA	72	36.92
	Ph.D	13	6.72
	Total	195	100.00
4	<b>Number of years of patronage</b>		
	<2yrs	31	15.90
	2-4yrs	86	44.10
	5-8yrs	64	32.82
	9yrs>	14	7.18
	Total	195	100.00

Table 3 above shows the information on demographic profile of respondents. The table shows that 88 respondents (45.13%) were male while 107 respondents (54.87%) were female. This implies that female respondents were of the majority.

The information on age brackets of the respondents in section 2 of Table 3 above shows that 34 respondents (17.44%) was less than 20 years, 56 respondents (28.72%) were within 20 – 29 years, 90 respondents (46.15%) were within 30 – 39 years while 15 respondents (7.69%) were greater than 40 years. This information shows that majority of the respondents were within 30-39 years.

Section 3 of Table 3 above shows information on the respondents' level of education. They were represented as follows: FSLC (19) (9.7%), SSCE/GCE (26) (13.33%), while HND/B.SC (65) (33.33%), MA/MSC/MBA (72) (36.92%) and Ph.D (13)(6.72) From the information it shows that respondents with MA/MSC/MBA are of the majority.

Section five of Table 3 records the number of years passengers had patronized domestic airline. The representation are as follows; <2yearas (31) (15.90%), 2-4years (86) (44.10%), 5-8years (64)(32.82%), >9years (14)(7.18%). From the information it shows that respondents who have worked for 2-4 years are of majority.

## TEST OF HYPOTHESES

### Multiple Regression Analysis

#### DECISION RULE

If  $PV < 0.05$  = Reject  $H_0$

$PV > 0.05$  = Accept  $H_0$

**Table 4-6 Multiple Regression Analysis showing the effect of brand experience dimensions on passenger behavioural intentions.**

**Table 4 Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.974 <sup>a</sup>	.949	.949	.30320

a. Predictors: (Constant), Reliability, Tangibility

**Table 5 ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	329.344	2	164.672	1791.266	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	17.651	192	.092		
	Total	346.995	194			

a. Dependent Variable: Passenger Behavioural Intentions

b. Predictors: (Constant), Reliability, Tangibility

**Table 6 Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.022	.065		.334	.739
	Tangibility	.065	.068	.061	.952	.342
	Reliability	.908	.063	.916	14.388	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Passenger Behavioural Intentions

For this study, regression analysis was performed to predict the level of passengers' behavioural intentions based on two independent factors of airline service quality. The two independent factors/dimensions of airline service quality are: tangibility and reliability.

The Table 4 shows that R is .974, R Square is .949 and adjusted R square is .949. This is an indication that 94.9% of the variance in passenger behavioural intentions can be explained by the changes in independent variables of airline service quality (tangibility and reliability). As a general rule, this model is considered as a 'good fit' as this, multiple regression model is able to explain above 60% (threshold) of variance in the dependent variable: passenger behavioural intentions (Moosa & Hassan, 2015). The ANOVA Test in Table 5 shows that  $F = 1791.266$  &  $p = .000 < 0.05$ , indicating significant relationship between the service quality and passenger behavioural intentions.

The result of the regression analysis (Table 6) shows that out of the two indicators of airline service quality in influencing passenger behavioural intentions only one made significant contribution to explaining the dependent variable. The only significant factor is: reliability (REL) ( $B = .916$ ;  $p = .000 < 0.05$ ). Tangibility did not make a significant unique contribution.

### Testing of hypotheses 1 and 2.

#### Decision Rule

If	$PV < 0.05$	=	Hypothesis is supported
	$PV > 0.05$	=	Hypothesis is not supported



## Hypotheses 1

### Effect of tangibility on passenger behavioural intentions

HO<sub>1</sub>: Tangibility does not have positive and significant effect on passenger behavioural intentions

HA<sub>1</sub>: Tangibility has positive and significant effect on passenger behavioural intentions

The result of the regression analysis (Table 6) shows that tangibility did not make positive and significant contribution to explaining the dependent variable (TAN) ( $B=.061$ ;  $p=.342 > 0.05$ ). Based on this result, the null hypothesis is accepted. It means therefore that tangibility has positive but not significant effect on passenger behavioural intentions. Accordingly therefore, we retained the null hypothesis.

HO<sub>1</sub>: Tangibility does not have positive and significant effect on passenger behavioural intentions

## Hypothesis 2

### Effect of reliability on passenger behavioural intentions

HO<sub>2</sub>: Reliability does not have positive and significant effect on passenger behavioural intentions

HA<sub>2</sub>: Reliability has positive and significant effect on passenger behavioural intentions

The result of the regression analysis (Table 6) shows that reliability made positive and significant contribution to explaining the dependent variable (REL) ( $B=.916$ ;  $p=.000 < 0.05$ ). Based on this result, the null hypothesis is accepted. It means therefore that reliability has positive and significant effect on passenger behavioural intentions. Accordingly therefore, we accept the alternative hypothesis.

HA<sub>2</sub>: Reliability has positive and significant effect on passenger behavioural intentions

## Discussion of Findings

### Relationship between tangibility and passenger behavioural intentions

The findings of this study show that tangibility has less influence on passenger behavioural intentions brand in the airline industry in Rivers State, Nigeria ( $B=.061$ ;  $p=.342 > 0.05$ ). The findings is not consistent with Karunaratne and Jayawardena, (2011) where guests of a five-star hotel located in Kandy district, Sri Lanka, expressed their satisfaction with the overall service they received from the hotel, especially regarding tangibility, responsiveness and assurance. The hotel had not fulfilled the customers' satisfaction with regard to reliability and empathy.

### Relationship between reliability and passenger behavioural intentions

The findings of this study show that reliability has great influence on passenger behavioural intentions brand in the airline industry in Rivers State, Nigeria ( $B=.916$ ;  $p=.000 < 0.05$ ). This is consistent with Aydrin and Yildirim (2012) who found in Turkey that different service quality dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy were considered important for different airline passengers. The results suggests that domestic airlines should maintain their credibility and ensure that they promise only what they can deliver. The finding is inconsistent with Karunaratne and Jayawardena, (2011) where a five-star hotel located in Kandy district, did not fulfil the guests' satisfaction with regard to reliability and empathy.

## Conclusion

The research effort examined the effect of airline service quality on passengers' behavioural intentions within the context of domestic airlines operating in the tourism sector of Port Harcourt, Rivers State Nigeria. First, the results of the empirical analyses have revealed that reliability had positive significant effect with passenger behavioural intentions. A very important finding of the study is the fact that statistical analysis of the relationship between airline service quality and passengers' behavioural intentions

showed that the coefficient of determination is 94.9%. The reason may not be far-fetched, as it could be ascribed to the fact that service quality delivery by an average service brand such as an airline enhances positive behavioural intentions of the customers. This implies that airline owners/managers ought to pay attention to the crafting and development of a competitive service quality strategy that is capable of engendering memorable service experience.

Secondly, the results of the inferential statistical analyses revealed that tangibility had very weak positive and insignificant effect on passengers' behavioural intentions ( $B=.061$ ;  $p=.342 < 0.05$ ). A very important finding of the study is the fact that statistical analysis of the effect of tangibility on passengers' behavioural intentions is the fact that tangibility had insignificant effect on passengers' behavioural intentions. This result is disturbing indeed for domestic airlines in Nigeria. This could be associated with the low value placed on the aircrafts in terms of maintenance and how modern they are. Other issues include the dressing of the airline personnel, provision of newspapers and clean toilets. The study implications calls for the quest to tangibilise the service components of the airline service quality by the airline owners/managers.

Thirdly, the results of the inferential statistical analyses revealed that reliability had high positive and significant effect on passengers' behavioural intentions ( $B=.916$ ;  $p=.000 < 0.05$ ). A very important finding of the study is the fact that statistical analysis of the effect of reliability on passengers' behavioural intentions is the fact that reliability had positive and significant effect on passengers' behavioural intentions. This result is encouraging and satisfactory indeed for domestic airlines in Nigeria. This could be associated with the value placed on the airlines' ability to handle passengers' luggages with adequate care and attention. Other issues include the ability to deliver services based on promises made. The study implications calls for the airline managers to endeavour to remain reliable in terms of delivering services based on promises made via external marketing communications.

It is therefore safe to conclude by stating that the outcome of the research indicates that airline service quality in terms of tangibility and reliability constitute an important determinant of passengers' behavioural intentions in the airline industry. It is very important for entrepreneurs and managers of domestic airline Nigeria to identify, evaluate, develop and manage airline service quality attributes capable of enhancing passenger satisfaction and the resultant positive behavioural intentions towards the airlines.

### **Recommendations**

- i. Hypothesis one showed that tangibility does not have significant effect on passengers' behavioural intentions towards domestic airlines in Rivers State, Nigeria. It is therefore recommended that Nigerian airline owners and their managers should ensure that they use modern aircrafts that are well maintained. They should also ensure that they tangibilise their services as much as possible through attractive uniforms for the service employees.
- ii. Reliability was found to have significant effect on passengers' behavioural intentions towards domestic airlines in Rivers State, Nigeria. Thus, it is recommended that more efforts as much as it depends on the airlines be made to keep to scheduled times for their flights.

### **Limitation and Suggestions for Further Study**

Only domestic airlines operating in Port Harcourt in the tourism sector of the economy were studied. Other service brands like hotels and Quick Service Restaurants (QSRs) in other states in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria should be studied in future.

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