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Relationship between destination service quality and tourists' satisfaction in Ikogosi Warm Spring Resort, Nigeria

Abstract

Service quality is one of the important elements to the achievement of customers' satisfaction. This paper examines the relationship between tourists' perceived destination service quality and tourists' satisfaction in Ikogosi Warm Spring Resort, Ikogosi-Ekiti, Nigeria. The study was a self-administered questionnaire survey involving 383 randomly selected tourists at the Resort between January and July, 2016. Data were analysed through descriptive statistics, T-test, Pearson's correlations, and Chi-square. The total mean score for the perceived service quality (Mean = 4.00) was higher than the total mean score for tourists' satisfaction (3.23). Among service quality dimensions, responsiveness had the highest mean (Mean = 4.05) while for dimensions of customers' satisfaction, premises had the highest mean (Mean = 3.35). The findings of the study indicate that perceived service quality factors are highly significant for the tourists' satisfaction towards the destination. Findings also reveal that there are high correlations between service quality and satisfaction and their dimensions. The study concludes that satisfaction with tourism experiences that the tourists have towards the destination is modified by their perceptions of service quality during their visit. It is fundamental to improve the overall quality of the tourists' experiences, especially focusing on those attributes that report lower levels of satisfaction such as guestroom, personnel attitude and competence and restaurant and bar, and service quality attributes such as assurance, tangibles, and empathy.

Key words: destination; service quality; satisfaction; tourist; warm spring; resort; Nigeria

Introduction

Tourism has become an important driver of global and national economies. Its contributions to the growth of local businesses and services are acknowledged in terms of employment, income, infrastructural development and livelihood activities. Tourism is thus a globalized sector, involving all sectors of global economy including aviation, hospitality, services and so on. According to World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2016), the growth of the travel and tourism sector in 2015 (2.8%) outpaced that of the global economy (2.3%) and a number of other major sectors such as manufacturing and retail. Travel and Tourism is one of the world's largest industries, contributing trillions of dollars annually to the global economy. WTTC (2016) reported that travel and tourism generated US $7.2 trillion (9.8% of global GDP) and supported 284 million jobs, equivalent to 1 in 11 jobs in the global economy in 2015. In the same vein, between January and August 2017, destinations worldwide welcomed 901 million international tourist arrivals (overnight visitors), 56 million more than the same period in of 2016, a robust 7% increase, well above the growth of previous years. Growth was strongest in Africa (+9%) and Europe (+8%) (UNWTO, 2017). WTTC (2017) estimated that travel and tourism direct

Adekunle Anthony Ogunjinmi, Senior Lecturer, Department of Ecotourism and Wildlife Management, School of Agriculture and Agricultural Technology, Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria; E-mail: aaogunjinmi@futa.edu.ng

Iyanuoluwa Yetunde Binuyo, Graduate Student, Department of Ecotourism and Wildlife Management, School of Agriculture and Agricultural Technology, Federal University of Technology, Nigeria; E-mail: binuyoiyanu@yahoo.com

contribution to GDP was USD2,306.0 billion (3.1% of total GDP) in 2016. The total contribution was also estimated to be USD7,613.3 billion (10.2% of GDP) in 2016 while it directly supported 108,741,000 jobs (3.6%) of total employment.

According to Mohammed (2006), the complexity and globalization of today's competitive business environment have made quality one of the most important sources of competitive advantage in the tourism industry, and the evaluation of customer satisfaction is one way to determine the quality being. Customer satisfaction plays an important role as a marketing tool to attract the most variable segments of the market. In order to effectively reap the benefits originating from tourism, it is imperative that tourism organizations set higher stakes to enhance the quality of the services they offer. Quality is considered to be the quintessential focus opportunity for the survival of every organization in today's global economy; organizations that provide high service quality pose challenges to other organizations (Rahaman, Abdullah & Rahman, 2011). Service quality and customer satisfaction have received a great deal of attention from both scholars and practitioners because of their relevancy and relationship (Eshghi et al., 2008) and the main reason for focusing on these issues is improving overall performance of organisations (Magi & Julander, 1996).

Review of literature
Tourist satisfaction

According to Bitner and Hubbert (1994), customer satisfaction is the term used for the measure of the extent to which the product or service provided by the organization meets customer expectations. Tourist satisfaction is important for successful destination marketing because it influences the choice of destination, the consumption of products and services, and the decision to return (Kozak & Rimmington, 2002). Oliver (1977) described satisfaction as the consumer's fulfilment response. It is a judgment that a product or service feature of the product or service itself, provided (or is providing) a pleasurable level of consumption – related fulfilment, including levels of under – or over fulfilment. Oliver (1980) proposed that a user's satisfaction level is a result of the difference between expected and perceived product performance, and expectations as predictions of future performance. In this theory, expectations originate from beliefs about the level of performance that a product/service will provide, which is the predictive meaning of the expectations concept (Aigbavboa & Thwala, 2013). Parasuraman et al. (1985) also proposed Gap Analysis Model. The main theme of the gap analysis is the fact that gaps between user expectations and user experiences lead to consumer dissatisfaction. Measuring gaps according to Aigbavboa and Thwala (2013) is the first step in enhancing consumer or service satisfaction, which results, in a better understanding of consumers' perceptions, that is important to an establishment and policy performances. Demographic factors that have been reported to influence tourists' satisfaction include age (Bagloglu & McCleary, 2000; Mackay & Fesenmaier, 1997), gender (Chen & Kerstetter, 1999), income (Mackay & Fesenmaier, 1997; Perović, Stanovčić, Moric & Pekovic, 2012). However, Baloglu (1999), found no statistically significant relationships between satisfaction and gender, income and education. According to Perović et al. (2012), age and gender do not influence tourists' satisfaction.

Service quality

Service quality is considered to be one of the management's topmost competitive priorities and a prerequisite for sustenance and growth of firms (Suuroja, 2003). Chingang and Lukong (2010) posited that service quality offers a competitive advantage to companies that strife to improve it and hence bring

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customer satisfaction. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) introduced the SERVQUAL model to measure service quality including 22 items in five dimensions: reliability, tangible, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. These dimensions have specific service characteristic link to the expectation of customers (Al-Ababneh, 2013). Service quality should start from the needs of the customer and ends with customer satisfaction and positive perceptions of service quality. Both consumer and the service provider have a significant influence on the creation and delivery process of a service therefore service was defined heterogeneous (Kvist & Klefsjö, 2006). The specificity of a tourist destination brings the necessity to apply integrated quality management that also includes evaluating the satisfaction of visitors to a destination with the key quality factors. It is observed that tourism is a highly competitive industry, and tourism enterprise sector can no longer compete on the basis of cost alone. Quality is, therefore, a key element for the competitiveness of the tourism industry (Wang, 2009). The existence of good service quality in a company, create satisfaction for its customers. Once consumers are satisfied with the products or services it receives, consumers will compare the services provided. If consumers feel completely satisfied, they will buy again and give recommendation to others to buy in the same place. Therefore, companies need to start thinking about the importance of customer service in a more mature through quality of service, as is now increasingly recognized that the service is a vital aspect in order to stay in business and win the competition (Tjiptono, 2004).

Expectations and perceptions of service quality have been shown to depend on demographic variables (Webster, 1989; Thompson & Kaminski, 1993; Gagliano & Hatcchote, 1994). Demographic factors that have been found to influence perception of service quality include age (Stafford, 1996, Kim & Lough, 2007), gender (Snipes, Thompson & Oswaild, 2006, Jelcic, 2015), education (Kim & Lough, 2007, Tabassum, Rahman & Jahan, 2012), and income (Ganesan-Lim, Russell-Bennett & Dagger, 2008; Jelcic, 2015).

Justification and objectives

Maintaining service quality and satisfaction have been one of the issues in Nigeria tourism sector particularly in the country's ecotourism sub-sector. Service quality is a key factor leading to the achievement of the ultimate goals of firms, examining service quality is thus useful for members of the service industry (Law & Yip, 2011). Evaluating satisfaction can assist managers to improve services (Fornell, 1992) and to compare organisations and destinations in terms of performance (Kotler, 1994). It is not enough to analyze his/her satisfaction, measured on an ordinal scale (very satisfied, satisfied, not satisfied), but to analyse the factors and their interrelationships in the process of the tourist satisfaction for a better understanding of the consumer psychology, as well (Perović et al., 2012). Understanding tourist's levels of satisfaction with and reaction to their experience in the destination is thus essential to destination managers for improving products and services, and effectively promoting to target markets for new and repeat tourists (Yu & Goulden, 2006).

While analyzing the relationship between the tourists' perceived service quality and satisfaction represents the overall purpose of this paper, the specific objectives are fourfold. Firstly, this study intends to describe the socio-demographic characteristics of tourists to the destination. Secondly, this paper equally assesses the tourists' perception of the destination service quality and satisfaction. Thirdly, the paper compares tourists' perceived service quality and satisfaction in all the selected socio-demographic groups and attributes so as to provide an overall assessment of tourism experience. Fourthly, this article establishes relationship between tourist satisfaction with the tourism experience and service quality and explores this relationship by identifying personal mediator variables in the connection between these constructs. Specifically, this study tests whether or not the relationship between satisfaction with the

tourism experience and perceived service quality is equally strong in all demographic groups. Accordingly, the following research hypotheses are formulated: 1) there are no socio-demographic differences in tourists' perceived service quality and satisfaction, 2) there is no significant relationship between tourists' perceived service quality and its dimensions and their satisfaction, 3) dimensions of satisfaction are not related to service quality, and 4) socio-economic characteristics of tourists are not related to their perceived service quality and satisfaction.

This study is most relevant for three reasons. Firstly, most studies involving tourism focused more on international tourism, depicting their volumes and expenditure with less emphasis on domestic tourism and its contribution to national and international tourism growth and development. According to Eijgelaar, Peeters and Piket (2008), international tourism is only one part and certainly in number of arrivals domestic tourism is several times larger than international. Ghimire (2001) also considered domestic tourism to be significantly greater than international tourism in terms of both value and number of trips. About 85% of global tourism comprises domestic trips (Bigano, Hamilton, Lau, Tol & Zhou, 2007). In furtherance to this, most destinations worldwide are increasingly turning toward domestic tourism as a contributor to a sustained tourism economy (Smeral, 2010). Okello, Dolan, Whande, Mncwabe and Oola (2012) posited that a vibrant domestic tourism sector can cushion the industry from fluctuations of the international tourism markets and bring stability and predictability in the industry. Domestic tourism makes a substantial contribution to the industry's overall financial resilience, sustainability and functionality – in fact many tourism businesses would not survive if it were not for the year round patronage of domestic visitors (Tourism 2025, 2014). The differing travel patterns of domestic visitors mean that they are an important contributor to regional economies, generating wealth and vibrancy that many regions and places would otherwise lack (Tourism 2025, 2014).

Secondly, consistent data on worldwide domestic tourism are not readily available, for example, UNWTO World Tourism Barometer 2008 was about in-bound and outbound international tourism growth forecasts without even mentioning the domestic tourism component once (Eijgelaar et al., 2008). Using data obtained from domestic tourists in most countries could provide reliable information on the status of tourism sector and highlight efforts geared towards global tourism development. According to Vujovic (2013), through data from domestic tourists, a more meaningful tourist information base could be formed which could uplift the ability of internal quality assurance and improvement of the organization by ensuring a stronger and more stable relationship between the factors of service, process which further contributes to the perceived level of quality of tourism service, and leads to higher user satisfaction.

Thirdly, national and regional tourism competitiveness can only be addressed using domestic tourism outlook as indicators. Findings from this study could provide insights on the state of tourist services in tourist destinations in Nigeria, particularly at waterfalls and springs considering her quest to key into global tourism sector for economic diversification. This could highlight the the country's competitiveness and relativity with international standards. Such information is germane for policy makers and professionals to inform decision making on national tourism sector as well as provide a basis for international tourists' pre-visit decisions in the choice of destinations.

Methodology

The study was conducted at Ikogosi Warm Spring Resort, Ikogosi-Ekiti, Ekiti West Local Government Area, Ekiti State, Nigeria (Figure 1). The small town of Ikogosi-Ekiti in Ekiti State in Western

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Nigeria is situated between lofty, steep-sided and heavily wooded, north-south trending hills about 27.4 km east of Ilesha (Osun State), and about 10.5 km southeast of Efon Alaaye (Ekiti State). It is located on 7^0 35'N latitude and Longitude 5^0 00' E longitude. The elevation of the area is between 457.0-487.5mm. Ikogosi Warm Spring Resort is one of the beauties of Nigeria in terms of natural endowment. The water runs down a hilly landscape where the warm springs form a confluence with other cold springs from adjoining hills and merge into one continuous flowing stream at 70 degrees. The Ikogosi Warm Spring seems to standout because of the uniqueness of its features as compared to any other of such worldwide.

Figure 1
Map of Ekiti State, Nigeria indicating the study location
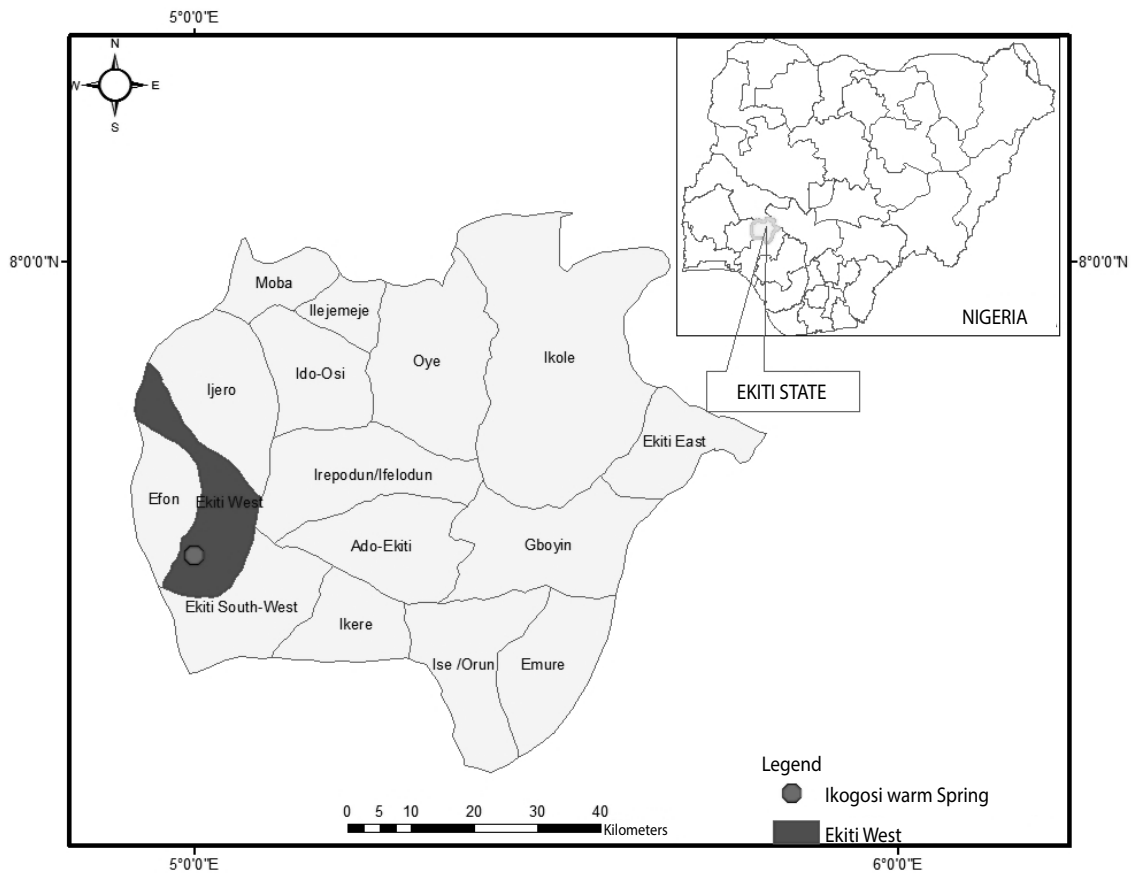
Ikogosi Warm Spring Resort as a tourist destination, have many values ranging from cultural, environmental, historical monument, the people and other forms of tourist elements which makes it to be a wonder to behold. It is situated in a valley and from the surrounding hills rises the warm spring. The vegetation of this resort centre is a highly thick forest. This natural and rich vegetation is closely maintained and protected from arbitrary deforestation. The area covered by this resort centre is about 31.38 hectares and it is highly protected from erosion by tall and evergreen trees. These trees also serve as a sort of canopy under which tourists could stay during the dry season and sunny days. The undulating topography of the entire tourist centre and the symmetry of the surrounding hills add more to the aesthetic beauty of this centre.

The warm spring is within massive quartzite and fissile quartzite bedrocks that form part of the Oke-mesi quartzite, member of the Efon psammite formation in the Ilesha schist belt of Nigerian Basement Complex. The Okemesi quartzite is characterized by a North-South trending ridge overlain by quartz mica schist and underlain by quartz sillimanite schist. Thus, the study area is characterized by undulating land forms with the quartzite forming the highland and the river channels indicating valleys. The quartzite constitutes the residual hills covered with gently sloping sediment that post erosion threat to the environment. The magnetic study of the area revealed fractured quartzite/faulted areas within fresh massive quartzite at varying depths while the geoelectrical sections developed from Vertical Electrical Sounding (VES) interpretation results also delineated a subsurface sequence consisting of a topsoil/weathered layer, fresh quartzite, fractured/faulted quartzite and fresh quartzite bedrock (Ojo, Olorunfemi & Falebita, 2011). There are two two seasons: rainy season (April–October) and the dry season (November–March) in Southwest Nigeria where Ikogosi Warm Spring Resort is situated. The south westerly wind and the northeast trade winds blow in the rainy and dry (Harmattan) seasons respectively. Tropical forest exists in the south, while savannah occupies the northern peripheries. The temperature of Ikogosi spring waters range between 22.1℃ and 34.8℃ with the maximum temperature occurring close to the point where the warm spring discharged/seeped out from the fractured quartzite bedrock (Oladipo, Oluyemi, Tubosun, Fasisi & Ibitoye, 2005).

The Resort is one of the most popular tourist sites and resorts in Nigeria. It is also one of the finest tourist destinations with enchanting natural beauty that stands out with stunning visual spectacle as well as globally acclaimed earth science and hydrological sites. The site boasts of 91 rooms in varying chalet sizes, 4 restaurants, revolving cock tail bar, non-static swimming pool, large parking ground, and a well-designed trail that leads to the meeting point of cold and warm water.

The population of the study was the visitors to Ikogosi Warm Spring Resort between January and July 2016. Sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) method for determination of sample size. This sample size was 383 and was based on 39,658, the total population of visitors to the Warm Spring and Resort in 2015. The study was a questionnaire survey involving 383 randomly selected tourists at the Resort between January and July, 2016. The questionnaire was self-administered by the tourists. The questionnaire consisted of tourists' socio-economic characteristics, service quality and satisfaction items. Data were collected from randomly selected tourists at the Resort during the period of the study. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach (1951) alpha procedure for determination of reliability. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient is 0.94 for service quality and 0.93 for tourist satisfaction (Table 1). Variables measured were gender, age, education, occupation, monthly income, and nationality. For this research, a multi-item measure developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1994) for service quality (ServQual) was used while satisfaction was measured using Rust and Zahorik (1993) tourist satisfaction scale. Data obtained were analysed and presented descriptively. Hypotheses were tested using t- test, ANOVA, Chi-square and Pearson's correlation. For each of the constructs and their dimensions (service quality and satisfaction), total scores for the number of items were computed from individual tourist responses and the means and standard deviations calculated. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software version 21 was used for the analysis.

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Table 1
Instruments' reliability measurement

Instrument	No of items	Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient
Service quality	21	0.94
Dimensions of service quality		
Reliability	5	0.87
Responsiveness	4	0.86
Assurance	5	0.87
Empathy	4	0.88
Tangibles	4	0.85
Tourist satisfaction	32	0.93
Accessibility	3	0.66
Premises	3	0.77
Personnel attitude and competence	7	0.88
Front desk/reception	4	0.82
Guest room	4	0.85
Restaurant	4	0.85
Ambience	4	0.83

Findings
Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Of the respondents, 50.5% were male while 49.5% were female. More than half of the respondents were in the age group of 25-54years (58.6%). Majority had tertiary education (72.8%). The study further reveals that 36.6% and 31.2% of them were students and had full-time paid work respectively. More than half of the tourists earned between 0- ₦20,000 monthly (USD 63.44, 315.250/USD at the time of this study) (54.5%). Among the respondents, 98.2% were Nigerians while 29.1% belonged to environment-related non-governmental organizations (Table 2).

Table 2
Socio-demographic characteristics of the tourists

Variable	Fre-quency	%
Sex		
Male	193	50.5
Female	189	49.5
Age		
0-14	8	2.1
15-24	119	31.2
25-54	224	58.6
55-64	17	4.5
65 and above	14	3.7
Education		
Non-formal	16	4.2
Primary	20	5.2
Secondary	68	17.8
Tertiary	278	72.8

Table 2 **Continued**

Variable	Fre-quency	%
Employment status		
Home/family duties	12	3.1
Student	140	36.6
Full-time paid work	119	31.2
Part-time/casual paid work	40	10.5
Unemployed	39	10.2
Retired	32	8.4
Income (Naira)		
0-20,000	209	54.5
21,000-40,000	52	13.6
41,000-60,000	51	13.4
61,000-80,000	30	7.9
Greater than 80,000	41	10.7
Nationality		
Nigerian	375	98.2
Non-Nigerian	7	1.8
Membership of Environment-related NGOs		
Yes	111	29.1
No	271	70.9

Perceived service quality by the tourists

The respondents' perceived service quality is presented in Table 3. The average perceived service quality score ranged from 3.87 to 4.15. The highest was 'providing services as promised' (Mean = 4.15, SD = 0.87) while the least was 'employees have the knowledge to answer customer questions' (Mean = 3.87, SD = 0.93). For dimensions of service quality, responsiveness had the highest average score (Mean = 4.05, SD = 0.80) while assurance had the least average score (Mean = 3.94, SD = 0.87). The total average score for perceived quality was 4.00.

Table 3
Tourists' perceived service quality

Service quality items	Mean	Standard deviation
Reliability		
Providing services as promised	4.15	0.87
Dependability in handling customers' service problems	4.04	0.77
Performing services right the first time	4.10	0.82
Providing services at the promised time	4.00	0.87
Maintaining error-free records	3.92	0.95
Total	4.04	0.86
Responsiveness		
Keeping customers informed about when services will be performed	4.10	0.82
Prompt service to customers	4.03	0.77
Willingness to help customers	4.04	0.80
Readiness to respond to customers' requests	4.02	0.79
Total	4.05	0.80

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Table 3 **Continued**

Service quality items	Mean	Standard deviation
Assurance		
Employees instil confidence in customers	4.02	0.87
Customers feel safe in their transactions	3.97	0.78
Employees are consistently courteous	3.90	0.90
Employees who have the knowledge to answer customer question	3.8	0.93
Total	3.94	0.87
Empathy		
Giving customers individual attention	4.06	0.93
Employees deal with customers in a caring fashion	3.94	0.90
Having the customer's best interest at heart	3.98	0.90
Employees understand the needs of their customers	3.93	0.90
Total	3.98	0.91
Tangibles		
Has modern equipment	4.07	0.88
Visually appealing facilities	3.90	0.87
Employees have a neat, professional appearance	4.03	0.90
Visually appealing materials associated with the service	3.89	0.93
Total	3.97	0.90
Total mean score for perceived service quality	4.00	0.57

Rated as Strongly agree=5, Agree=4, Undecided=3, Disagree=2, Strongly agree=1

Tourists' satisfaction

The tourists' satisfaction with services is presented in Table 4. The average customer satisfaction score ranged from 3.08 to 3.43. The highest 'surroundings' (Mean = 3.43, SD = 0.61) while the least was 'the room amenities' (Mean = 3.08, SD = 0.76). For dimensions of customers' satisfaction, premises had the highest (Mean = 3.35, SD = 0.64) while attitude and competence of the personnel had the least (Mean = 3.18, SD = 0.70). The total average score for satisfaction was 3.26.

Table 4
Tourists' satisfaction

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation
Concerning the accessibility to the tourist office, are you satisfied with the following criteria:		
Ease in finding the tourist office	3.37	0.72
Ease in parking close by	3.13	0.77
Opening hours	3.34	0.66
What is your overall assessment of the tourist office accessibility?	3.39	0.63
Total	3.31	0.70
Concerning the premises, are you satisfied with the following criteria:		
Surroundings (neatness, temperature, …)	3.43	0.61
Comfort of premises	3.37	0.62
Self-service tourist information (display units, filing)	3.30	0.67
What is your overall assessment of the tourist office premises?	3.28	0.64
Total	3.35	0.64

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Table 4 **Continued**

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation
Concerning the attitude and competence of the personnel, are you satisfied with the following criteria:		
Waiting time	3.25	0.69
Courtesy of your interpreter	3.13	0.65
Listening	3.19	0.71
Availability	3.18	0.72
Understanding of your request	3.20	0.68
Reply suited to your request	3.16	0.68
Quickness to obtain an answer to your request	3.16	0.73
What is your overall assessment of the tourist office personnel?	3.15	0.70
Total	3.18	0.70
Hospitality		
Front desk / reception		
Courtesy and friendliness of associates	3.31	0.70
Quickness and efficiency of associates	3.21	0.67
The physical appearance of the reception area	3.24	0.69
The ambiance of the reception area	3.17	0.72
Total	3.23	0.70
Guestroom		
The willingness and ability of the personnel to provide service	3.18	0.79
The room amenities (e.g. TV, lamp, phone, mini-bar etc.)	3.08	0.76
The room comfort	3.20	0.75
Room cleanliness	3.15	0.74
Total	3.15	0.76
Restaurant and bar		
Courtesy and friendliness of associates	3.28	0.68
Quickness and efficiency of associates	3.19	0.68
Quality of food and beverages	3.15	0.74
The ambiance of the food and beverage area	3.14	0.73
Total	3.19	0.71
Ambience		
Lodge location	3.27	0.73
Interior design	3.18	0.68
Lodge's atmosphere	3.28	0.66
External appearance	3.19	0.69
Total	3.23	0.70
Total mean score for hospitality	3.20	0.72
Total mean satisfaction score	3.26	0.69

Rated as very satisfied=4, Satisfied=3, Dissatisfied=2, Very dissatisfied=1

Socio-demographic differences in tourists' perceived service quality and satisfaction

T-test and ANOVA were computed to determine if there were statistically significant differences in tourists' perceived service quality and satisfaction based on the selected socio-demographic variables. The variables were gender, age, education, and income. As shown in Table 5, there was no statistically significant difference between male and female on perceived service quality and satisfaction. In addition,

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there was no significant difference based on education and income of the tourists. However, ANOVA results showed statistically significant differences in perceived service quality based on age while there was no statistically significant difference in satisfaction based on the selected socio-demographic variables.

Table 5
Socio-demographic differences in tourists' perceived service quality and satisfaction

Socio-demographic variable	Perceived service quality	Satisfaction
	t value	t value
Gender	-1.344	0.531
	F value	F value
Age	3.256**	1.144
Education	1.983	0.522
Income	1.179	1.116

**P<0.01

Relationship between tourists' perceived service quality and satisfaction

The study reveals that relationship exists between tourists' perceived service quality and satisfaction ($r = 0.61$, $p<0.01$). There was also significant relationship between all the dimensions of service quality and tourists' satisfaction ($p<0.01$) (Table 6). There was significant relationship between the dimensions of satisfaction and service quality ($p<0.01$) (Table 7).

Table 6
Association between service quality and its dimensions and tourists' satisfaction

Service quality	Correlation value (r)
Overall service quality	0.61**
Dimensions of service quality	
Reliability	0.47**
Responsibility	0.53**
Assurance	0.52**
Empathy	0.45**
Tangibles	0.46**

**P<0.01

Table 7
Relationship between dimensions of satisfaction and service quality

Tourists' satisfaction dimensions	Correlation value (r)
Accessibility	0.39**
Premises	0.40**
Personnel attitude and competence	0.46**
Hospitality	
Front desk/reception	0.45**
Guest room	0.36*
Restaurant	0.45**
Ambience	0.38**

*P<0.05; **P<0.01

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Relationship between socio-demographic characteristics of tourists' and their perceived service quality and satisfaction

Table 8 presents the relationship between selected socio-demographic characteristics and their perceived service quality and satisfaction. Correlation tests show no significant relationship between age, monthly income and tourists' perceived service quality and satisfaction (p>0.05). However, Chi-square test further reveals that education had significant relationship with tourists' perceived service quality (χ^2 = 227.50, p<0.01) and satisfaction (χ^2=215.72, p<0.01).

Table 8
Relationship between the selected socio-demographic characteristics of tourists and their perceived service quality and satisfaction

Variable	Correlation values (r)	
	Perceived service quality	Tourists' satisfaction
Age	0.08	0.03
Income	-0.06	-0.04
	Chi-square values (χ^2)	
Sex	44.11	45.67
Education	227.50**	215.72**

Discussion

According to the findings, more male participated in this study (50.5%). This is consistent with the estimated sex ratio of 1.04 male/female in 2017 Nigeria (CIA, 2018). The lower percentage of female tourists obtained in this study might be due to the culture of the people which restricts freedom of outings for female child than the male child. Most of the female visiting recreation areas are undergraduate students and National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) members who had little or no restriction because they are not living with their parents during the service year. The result is inconsistent with more female than male observed by Oom do Valle, Silva, Mendes and Guerreiro (2006) and Ogony, Onyango and Nyagol (2014). Respondents within the age range of 25-54 years were in the majority (58.6%), which implies that majority of the respondents were young and active and thus the propensity for travelling for leisure and recreation. This age group is the estimated second largest age group for Nigeria (Central Intelligence Agency Factbook, 2015). It is in agreement with Ogunjinmi (2015) who reported that the highest percentage of ecotourists in Nigeria National Parks were within 21-40 years of age. Finding also indicated that 72.8% of the tourists had tertiary education, implying that tourists to the Resort were well educated.

The study further reveals that 36.6% and 31.2% of them were students and had full-time paid work respectively. This could imply that students and paid workers patronize the Resort more than other occupational categories. This is in agreement with Oom do Valle et al. (2006). However, it inconsistent with Ogunjinmi (2015) and this might be due to the distance of National Parks from major Nigerian cities which could hinder students' trips to them except for educational purpose because of the higher cost that such travel could incur. More than half of the tourists (54.5%) earned between ₦0- ₦20,000 monthly (USD63.44, 315.250/USD). This implies that they were low income earners when one considers the value of the Naira (i.e., the country's currency) with its dollar equivalent which was 315.250/USD at Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) rate. Findings further showed that 98.2% were Nigerians, an indication that there was low level of visitation to the Resort by international tourists.

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This is inconsistent with Oom do Valle et al. (2014) that reported that 72.0% were foreign tourists. The low level of visitation by international tourists could be due to insecurity problems Nigeria is currently facing and which could deter citizens from other countries from visiting tourism and recreation centres because of the perceived inherent security dangers. There is low level of membership of environment-related non-governmental organizations by majority of the respondents. This is in line with the observations of Ogunjinmi (2015) among Nigeria National Parks visitors. The low level of membership of environment-related NGOs by tourists in Nigeria could be due to low level of awareness about the activities of most of the environmental non-governmental organisations (such as NEST, NCF, WCS etc.) operating in the country (Ogunjinmi, 2015).

Findings indicated that the respondents perceived service quality and satisfaction was very high and high respectively. Responsiveness had the highest average score among service quality dimensions while assurance had the least, indicating that the 'knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence' do not sustain quality service for the tourists at the Resort. This result is inconsistent with previous studies (Law & Yip, 2011; Ogony et al., 2014). For tourists' satisfaction dimensions, 'premises' had the highest rating with 'attitude and competence' of the personnel' having the least, which indicates that the Resort personnel do not exhibit suitable attitude and competence that could enhance the tourist satisfaction with the Resort. Differences between the previous studies and this study could have emanated from different tourism environment, prioritization of standards in all aspect of tourism management and providing adequate training for employees in tourism sector.

Findings also indicated no statistically significant difference in tourists' perceived service quality based on gender, education, and income while statistically significant differences existed in based on age. The finding on gender is consistent with Frater (2006) while it is inconsistent with Sánchez-Hernández, Martínez-Tur, Peiró and Moliner (2010). However, the result on education is inconsistent with Frater (2006) and while it is in line with Scott and Schieff (1993). The finding on age is consistent with Stafford (1996), indicating that perception of service quality varies with age. However, for satisfaction, there were no significant difference based on the selected socio-demographic variables which suggest the limited roles the selected socio-economic variables play in satisfaction tourists' satisfaction at the destination.

The study reveals that relationship exists between tourists' perceived service quality and satisfaction and between all the dimensions of service quality and satisfaction. There was significant relationship between the dimensions of satisfaction and service quality. These findings are consistent with the observation of Ali, Khan and Rehman (2012), Forozia, Zadeh and Gilani (2013), Houssain (2012), Beqiri, Borici, Borici and Dergjini (2014), Abu Alroub, Alsaleem and Daoud (2012), Suki (2013) and Nithila (2014).

Correlation tests show no significant relationship between age, monthly income, and tourists' perceived service quality and satisfaction, which indicates that these variables have marginal roles in the tourists' perceived service quality and satisfaction. The findings are consistent with Hagan (2015) on age and perception of service quality but not in agreement with Butler, Sharon and Turner (1996) on age, Hagan (2015) and Jelcic (2015) on income, Galiano and Hatchote (1994) and Thompson and Kaminski (1993) on age and income. Chi-square test further revealed that education had significant relationship with tourists' perceived service quality and satisfaction. This implies that education is an important factor when considering tourists' perception of service quality and satisfaction which is consistent with Adjoe (2014) on education and satisfaction with service delivery while it is not in agreement with Mohammad and Vijit (2016) and Perović et al. (2012) on age, income, and satisfaction.

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Conclusion

The study revealed that the perceived service quality of the tourists was very high. Responsiveness had the highest rating among service quality dimensions while assurance had the least. Tourists' satisfaction was also high with premises having the highest rating among satisfaction dimensions while the least was attitude and competence of personnel. However, the total mean score for perceived quality was higher than satisfaction, an indication that though the perception of service quality was very high, that of satisfaction derived by the tourists were lower in comparison with service quality. There was significant relationship between their perceived service quality and satisfaction and also between some of the selected socio-demographic characteristics and the perceived service quality and satisfaction. Overall, satisfaction with tourism experiences that the tourists had towards the destination was modified by their perceptions of service quality during their visit to the Resort. It is fundamental to improve the overall quality of the tourists' experiences, especially focusing on those attributes that report lower levels of satisfaction such as guestroom, personnel attitude and competence and restaurant and bar, and service quality attributes such as assurance, tangibles, and empathy

Limitations and implications of findings

This research has some limitations- 1) this research relied on administration of questionnaire, combination of different data collection instruments such as personal interviews and observations could also add insight into the tourists' perceived service quality and satisfaction, and 2) large percentage of the respondents were domestic tourists and this could limit the generalization of the results to international tourists. However, the focus of this study – service quality and satisfaction, are very germane to global tourism sector and data could provide information relevant to international tourists on the quality of service at this destination which could enable them to make pre-visit decision when considering the Resort for recreation and tourism destination.

The findings from this study highlighted several implications for tourism site managements. This implies that tourists' satisfaction level could be enhanced and increased by improving on service quality level. The results suggest that ecotourism site management agencies need to place much emphasis on service quality due to its importance and relationship with tourists' satisfaction. It is fundamental to improve the overall quality of the tourists' experiences, especially focusing on those attributes that report lower levels of satisfaction such as guestroom, personnel attitude and competence and restaurant and bar, and service quality attributes such as assurance, tangibles, and empathy. An improvement in service quality can attract further tourists to the site and increase eco-destination competitiveness and thus increase impacts of tourism on local and national economic development. Furthermore, the study reiterated the relationship between socio-economic characteristics of tourists and their perceived service quality and satisfaction. These could be used to segment tourist market, particularly in ecotourism sites.

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