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Original Article

The Relationship Between Service Quality, Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions of Tourists: The Case of Hau Giang Province, Vietnam

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Abstract *- Service quality, satisfaction and the behavioral intentions of tourists are critical constructs in tourism. These factors play a significant role in the rapid and sustainable development of the tourism industry. However, the relationship between these constructs has not been studied sufficiently within the framework of agritourism destinations and Vietnam. Employing a quantitative methodology, this research examines the relationship between these constructs based on survey data from 150 tourists. The Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method was applied to analyze the data. The results reveal that service quality has a significant and positive impact on tourists' satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Tourist satisfaction influences their behavioral intentions and acts as a mediator in the relationship between service quality and loyalty. In the relationship among service quality, satisfaction and behavioral intentions, service quality has the strongest effect on satisfaction, followed by the influence of satisfaction on behavioral intentions, while the effect of service quality on behavioral intentions is the weakest. This study contributes theoretically and to destination management implications within the framework of the relationship between service quality, satisfaction and tourists' behavioural intentions.*

Keywords *- Behavioral intentions, Hau Giang Province, Satisfaction, Service quality, Tourism, Tourists.*

1. Introduction

Tourism is an exciting field of study and business, and it has become increasingly familiar to many people. When discussing the function of tourism, it is often associated with providing joy or entertainment, creating employment opportunities, generating business prospects and income, and fostering greater understanding. Tourism encompasses a variety of activities, including travel, dining, resting, sightseeing, recreation, shopping, medical treatment, education, and cultural exchange. As such, it relies on numerous types of business services. In the context of the increasingly fierce competition in the tourism market, destinations focus on diversity and pay great attention to the quality of services.

According to Kandampully & Suhartanto (2000), the quality of service provided determines differentiation, competitiveness, and success in a destination. Higher service quality leads to greater satisfaction and more positive behavioral intentions among tourists, as these three constructs are positively related. Providing high-quality service can help destinations gain greater market share, positive word of mouth, reduced operating costs, and increased profits (Albacete-Saez et al., 2007; Duncan & Elliott, 2002).

Many investigations have explored the connection between service quality, satisfaction and behavioral intentions of tourists. Globally, the relationship among these three constructs has been examined in the setting of the COVID-19 pandemic from the perspective of yoga tourists (Abdou et al., 2022), in East Java, Indonesia (Islamy et al., 2022), medical tourism in Malaysia (Cham et al., 2014), from the perspective of forest tourists (Lee et al., 2004), international tourists in Indonesia (Rahmiati et al., 2020), medical tourists (Habibi & Rasoolimanesh, 2021), the Greek Carnival Festival (Papadimitriou, 2013), and Kuakata Beach in Bangladesh (Talukder et al., 2024). These studies were conducted in various contexts and produced somewhat inconsistent results. Many studies found that service quality positively influenced satisfaction and behavioral intentions; other studies have not observed a significant association. According to Abdou et al. (2022), there is still debate regarding the relationship between these three constructs. Therefore, more research is needed (Abdou et al., 2022) to provide additional empirical evidence and clarify these relationships. In Vietnam, limited research has been conducted on the relationship between service quality, satisfaction and tourists' behavioral intentions. One study was conducted in the context of homestay tourism (Nguyen,

2016). Both internationally and in Vietnam, there are few studies conducted on the case of agricultural tourism destinations. While this is a type of tourism used as a tool to promote agricultural development, rural modernization, and improve the quality of farmers' lives. Conducting this study not only contributes to the understanding of the connection between service quality, satisfaction and behavioral intentions of tourists but also offers practical insights for managers in the agricultural tourism sector.

This study focuses on Hau Giang's agricultural tourism destination as the research context to provide evidence in a setting different from the studies mentioned above. Hau Giang is a province located in the inland region of the Mekong Delta in Vietnam. It is known as the "land of Hau River," the "kingdom of betel leaves," and the "green lung of the West." With an area of 1,622.23 km², Hau Giang is home to 729,467 people (2022). The province is characterized by a low-lying, flat terrain (with an average height of 1-1.5 meters above sea level), a network of rivers, canals, and dikes (approximately 2,300 km), and a tropical monsoon climate (average temperature of 27°C, annual rainfall of approximately 1,800 mm, and relative humidity of about 11%). The region's natural features include rice cultivation, fruit trees, freshwater fisheries, and submerged forest ecosystems, which are considered biological advantages. In addition, Hau Giang has many traditional craft villages, local specialities (pineapple, grapefruit, tangerines, fish), cultural and historical monuments, and festivals. Hau Giang has developed numerous agricultural tourism attractions based on these natural and cultural factors. Recently, the province has paid great attention to tourism development to turn tourism into one of the economic pillars. In addition to the advantages and efforts, tourism in the province is facing service quality issues, which can be an obstacle to tourists' satisfaction and loyalty. To date, no research has been conducted to analyze the relationship between service quality, satisfaction, and tourists' behavioural intentions in this region. This study aims to fill this gap and contribute to the theoretical and practical understanding of this research direction.

2. Literature Review and Research Hypotheses

2.1. Service Quality

The concept of "service quality" is formed by integrating two words "service" and "quality". Services are the results of activities that are not expressed in physical products. Quality is about aligning with requirements. Service quality has attracted significant attention from researchers and scholars worldwide (Abdou et al., 2022) because it is critical to the survival of any business and tourism destination. Due to its intangible, heterogeneous, and inseparable characteristics, service quality has become a complex, debated, and multifaceted concept. Service quality is not what the service provider claims but what customers receive and are willing to pay for (Gronroos, 1978). Parasuraman et al. (1985) conceptualized service quality as the disparity between what customers anticipate from a service and their experience. This framework suggests that service quality is high when the perceived service aligns with or surpasses customer expectations and low when it falls short. Ramya et al. (2019) suggest that service quality is the customer's evaluation of how well the service provided matches their expectations. Although there are various viewpoints on service quality, common points widely agreed upon by scholars include: service quality is what customers perceive, not what the service provider claims; service quality reflects the degree of alignment with customer requirements; service quality is determined based on the customer's perceptions related to their needs.

Many researchers have sought to define the dimensions of service quality. Gronroos (1978) identified three primary aspects: technical quality, functional quality, and company image. Later, Parasuraman et al. (1988) introduced the SERVQUAL framework, which outlines five key dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. According to Marić et al. (2016), service quality includes tangible and intangible elements. Parasuraman et al.'s (1988) service quality dimensions reflect the multifaceted nature of the issue and are widely applied in research. Tangibles refer to physical conditions, equipment, and the outward appearance of service staff. The capacity to consistently deliver the promised service dependably and accurately is what defines reliability. Responsiveness is the readiness to assist customers and provide service on time. Assurance involves the knowledge, courtesy of staff, and the ability of the company and its employees to build trust and confidence in customers. Empathy refers to caring and paying attention to individual customers. Service quality holds a pivotal position for tourism destinations in particular and the tourism industry in general. Competitiveness, image, differentiation of the destination, as well as tourist satisfaction and loyalty, are all related to service quality (Canny, 2012).

2.2. Tourist Satisfaction

In recent years, the topic of tourist satisfaction has garnered significant attention in tourism research. The concept of "tourist satisfaction" in the realm of tourism is derived from the idea of "customer satisfaction" within the marketing discipline (Chen et al., 2013). Customer satisfaction refers to an emotional reaction arising from the disparity between what consumers expect before purchasing and how they perceive the product or service after the purchase (Oliver, 1980). Therefore, satisfaction is influenced by the difference between perceived outcomes and expectations. If the actual outcome falls below expectations, customers will be dissatisfied; customers will feel satisfied if the actual results align with their expectations; and if the actual outcome exceeds expectations, customers will feel satisfied (Kopalle & Lehmann, 2006). The implementation of customer satisfaction theory within tourism research dates

back to the 1960s (Chen et al., 2013). Initially, research on "tourist satisfaction" focused on products and services. In recent years, many researchers have examined the competition between tourist destinations with a view to tourist satisfaction (Chen et al., 2013). Tourist satisfaction is a psychological state that arises from using or interacting with a product or service at a location. Tourists may feel comfortable, delighted, and happy, or feel disappointed due to the evaluation of the actual benefits received about their expectations. All of these emotional responses contribute to whether tourists are satisfied or dissatisfied. Enhancing tourist satisfaction positively impacts the service providers and promotes the destination's reputation, boosts tourist loyalty, reduces price elasticity, lowers future transaction costs, and improves production efficiency (Chen et al., 2013).

2.3. Tourist Behavioral Intentions

It is possible to understand the motivations or intentions of future visitors based on analyzing their behavioral intentions (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020). This concept has been widely studied within the tourism sector. The behavioral intention of tourists can be understood as referring to their planned actions after experiencing a destination (Naik et al., 2010). Many researchers use variables to measure tourist behavioral intentions, including plans to return and suggest the destination to others (Abdou et al., 2022). Positive behavioral intentions are considered similar to loyalty. Tourists' behavioral intentions serve as indicators for forecasting their future actions, although behavioral intentions do not always translate into actual behavior (Baker & Crompton, 2000). Therefore, if assessed accurately, researchers can predict what tourists will do in the future. With the current understanding in research, behavioural intention can predict actual behaviour (Habibi & Rasoolimanesh, 2021). To survive and thrive in a highly competitive environment, businesses and tourism destinations should focus on understanding tourists' behavioral intentions. According to Zeithaml et al. (1996), tourists' destination choice, consumption ability, and spending capacity depend on their positive behavioral intentions.

2.4. The Relationship Between Service Quality, Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions of Tourists

Based on the literature reviewed above, it is clear that the constructs of service quality, satisfaction and behavioral intentions of tourists are of significant importance in tourism development. Consequently, many scholars have studied these constructs and their relationships. Within the realm of yoga tourism, service quality has been shown to positively influence both tourist satisfaction and their behavioral intentions, with satisfaction positively influencing behavioral intentions and service quality influencing satisfaction, subsequently affecting tourists' behavioral intentions (Abdou et al., 2022). Research conducted by Cham et al. (2014) shows that service quality has been identified as a crucial factor that significantly influences both patient satisfaction and behavioral intentions in the medical tourism industry. The direct impact of service quality on tourists' satisfaction and behavioral intentions, with satisfaction as an intermediary between service quality and behavioral intentions, was also observed in forest tourism (Lee et al., 2004). In ecotourism, service quality positively contributes to tourists' satisfaction and behavioral intentions, and satisfaction positively contributes to tourist behavioral intentions (Talukder et al., 2024). These findings offer the premise for the subsequent hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Service quality at the Hau Giang destination positively contributes to tourist satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Service quality at the Hau Giang destination positively contributes to tourist behavioral intentions.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Tourist satisfaction with the Hau Giang destination positively contributes to their behavioral intentions.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Tourist satisfaction with the Hau Giang destination plays a significant role in mediation the connection between service quality and tourists' behavioral intentions.

The conceptual study model is presented in Figure 1.

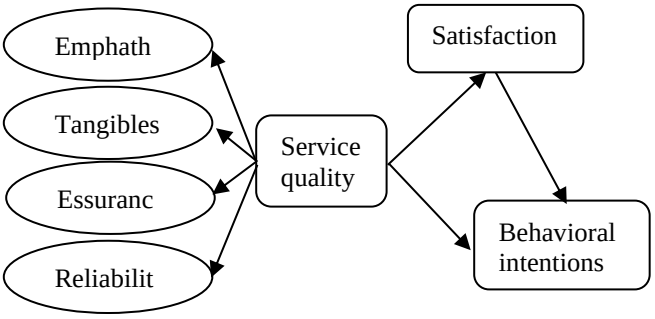

Fig. 1 Conceptual research model

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Structures and Scales

The three structures that need to be tested for their relationships within the scope of this research are service quality, satisfaction and behavioral intentions of tourists, which will help clarify the study's objective. The service quality structure is measured using four scales: tangibles, empathy, assurance, and reliability. The responsibility factor was not employed to assess service quality, which is a study limitation. Drawing from the conceptualization proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1988), the studies by Luu (2014) and Nguyen et al. (2015), the research team developed observed variables for the scales reflecting service quality.

Accordingly, each scale (empathy, tangibles, assurance, and reliability) is measured by five observed variables. A single observed variable measures the tourist satisfaction structure: "I am satisfied with my experience on this trip" (Abdou et al., 2022). The tourists' behavioral intention structure is measured by two observed variables: "I will revisit this destination in the future" and "I will encourage my relatives and friends to visit Hau Giang" (Habibi & Rasoolimanesh, 2021). Each observed variable is evaluated with a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 represents strongly disagree, and 5 represents strongly agree. The structures, scales, and observed variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Structures, scales, and observed variables

Structure	Scale and observed variables	Symbol
Service Quality	*Empathy*	SQ, EMP
	Staff are polite and courteous to tourists	Emp1
	Local people are friendly and hospitable	Emp2
	Staff respond to customer requests promptly	Emp3
	Staff demonstrate attentiveness and listen to customers	Emp4
	Staff have a professional and dedicated working attitude	Emp5
	Tangibles	TAN
	The accommodation system is clean, spacious, and well-ventilated	Tan1
	The transportation means are modern and safe	Tan2
	Good transportation connections	Tan3
	The communication system is complete	Tan4
	Diverse and abundant local dishes, specialties, and souvenirs	Tan5
	Assurance	ASS
	Security is guaranteed	Ass1
	Environmental hygiene is ensured	Ass2
	Food hygiene and safety are guaranteed	Ass3
	The restroom system is clean	Ass4
	The staff's foreign language proficiency is good	Ass5
	Reliability	REL
	There are many channels for introducing tourism	Rel1
	Services such as advertising are provided	Rel2
	The quality of services matches what is advertised	Rel3
	The service prices are listed and accurately sold	Rel4
	Staff and management comply with commitments made to customers	Rel5
Satisfaction	I am satisfied with my experience on this trip	SAT
Behavioral Intentions	I will revisit this destination in the future	Bi1
	du lịch, I will encourage my relatives and friends to visit Hau Giang	Bi2

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis

The research data was collected using a survey questionnaire method. The shape of the questionnaire includes 4 sections. Section 1 includes questions about the respondents' general information. Questions related to the tourists' activities at the destination are designed in Section 2. Section 3 evaluates tourists' perceptions of various aspects of service quality. Questions about tourists' satisfaction and behavioral intentions are presented in Section 4. In addition to the Likert scale used to measure the variables in Sections 3 and 4, the other variables in Sections 1 and 2 are measured using nominal and ordinal scales. Several suggestions exist for determining the sample size based on formulas and experience. The sample size in this study is determined based on the guidelines provided by Hoyle (1995). Accordingly, a sample size between 100 and 200 is a practical initial step for conducting path modeling. The study applied a sample size of 150 to meet this requirement. The data was collected using a direct survey method with convenient, self-administered questionnaires. The surveys were conducted at prominent tourist sites in Hau Giang province in January and February 2025.

To ensure the validity of the research (content validity and theoretical relevance), three tourism experts evaluated the questionnaire's content. Some minor adjustments were developed using the experts' suggestions. Finally, the official questionnaire was reproduced and distributed directly to the respondents. A total of 150 completed questionnaires were collected for data analysis. Preliminary analysis showed that 44% of respondents were male and 56% were female.

The respondents' ages varied, with the largest group being 18-29 years old (54.7%), followed by the 30-59 age group (41.3%), and the smallest group was 60 years and older (4%). The largest proportion of respondents were students (50.7%),

followed by workers and farmers (27.3%), business owners and traders (12.7%), and the remaining respondents (9.3%) were retirees, civil servants, and government employees. The factors attracting tourists to Hau Giang include the fresh rural atmosphere (75.3%), various recreational activities (61.3%), and the friendly and enthusiastic attitude of the staff (52%). Additionally, the opportunity to experience local cultural identity (47.3%), biodiversity (36.7%), and pristine landscapes (32%) were also key attractions for tourists.

Multiple data analysis methods were used in this study. The demographic characteristics of the respondents, the factors attracting tourists, and service quality were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Service quality scales were tested for reliability and subjected to exploratory factor analysis.

The Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique was utilized to examine reliability, convergent validity, discriminant validity, and the relationships among the constructs. Therefore, two software programs, IBM SPSS Statistics 20 and SmartPLS 3, were utilized.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

4.1.1. Reliability Test of the Scales

The observed variables reflecting service quality were constructed based on the definitions proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1988), building on the research by Luu (2014) and Nguyen et al. (2015). They were modified and supplemented to fit the context of this study, so they need to be tested for reliability. The empathy scale has a Cronbach's alpha = 0.909, with adjusted item-total correlations between 0.705 and 0.839.

For the tangibles scale, Cronbach's alpha is 0.891, and the corrected item-total correlations range from 0.670 to 0.769. For the assurance scale, Cronbach's alpha is 0.879 and corrected item-total correlations range from 0.598 to 0.762. The reliability for the reliability scale is Cronbach's alpha = 0.768, featuring corrected item-total correlations spanning from 0.483 to 0.574. Therefore, the scales and observed variables satisfy the reliability criteria (Hair et al., 2010). These observed variables are qualified to be used for exploratory factor analysis in the next step.

4.1.2. Exploratory Factor Analysis

Multiple scales and observed variables measure service quality. The Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) is employed to assess the scales' convergent and discriminant validity. Firstly, the data is appropriate for Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), with a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy of 0.813 (greater than 0.5), a p-value of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity of 0.000 (less than 0.05), and a cumulative variance explained of 66.59% (greater than 50%) (Hair et al., 2010). With Eigenvalues greater than 1 and factor loadings above 0.5, service quality is composed of four factors: empathy (Factor 1), tangibles (Factor 2), assurance (Factor 3), and reliability (Factor 4). The scales and observed variables for measuring service quality maintain the number of factors and the number of variables in each factor as in the original model. This indicates that the service quality scales ensure construct validity (the variables correctly measure the intended concepts, and the scales represent different constructs).

4.1.3. Measurement Model Analysis

There is no single overall model fit index in PLS-SEM; therefore, several indices are used to assess the quality of the model. In reflective measurement model analysis, the reliability and validity of the constructs need to be considered. Indicator reliability and internal consistency reliability are used to measure the reliability of the constructs. The factor loadings measure indicator reliability.

A factor loading value above 0.708, explaining more than 50% of the variance of the indicator, is considered to satisfy indicator reliability (Sarstedt et al., 2021). Internal consistency reliability can be measured using Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). Compared to composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha often underestimates a scale's reliability, making composite reliability a more suitable measure for the PLS (Partial Least Squares) model (Hair et al., 2022). Therefore, the composite reliability of Jöreskog (1971) is used. Composite reliability values ranging from 0.6 to 0.7 are considered acceptable for exploratory research, while values falling between 0.7 and 0.95 signify acceptable high reliability (Hair et al., 2022). The findings from the data analysis presented in Table 2 show that the scales ensure both the reliability of individual indicators and the consistency within the scale.

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) index is utilized to evaluate the convergent validity of the reflective measurement model. A value of 0.5 or above is considered an acceptable threshold for this index, indicating that the construct accounts for at least 50% of the variance in its variables (Sarstedt et al., 2021). The data in Table 2 show that the constructs ensure convergent validity.

The heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) of correlations, proposed by Henseler et al. (2015), is used to assess the discriminant validity of the constructs (Sarstedt et al., 2021). Henseler et al. (2015) recommend a threshold value of 0.90, preferably 0.85 or lower, for HTMT to ensure the distinctiveness of the constructs. The data analysis presented in Table 3 indicates that all HTMT values fall below the 0.85 threshold, confirming the discriminant validity of the constructs.

Table 2. Reliability and convergent validity analysis results for service quality scales

Scale	Indicators	Mean	Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Empathy	Emp1	4.43	0.855	0.909	0.932	0.734
	Emp2	4.26	0.851			
	Emp3	4.33	0.900			
	Emp4	4.41	0.863			
	Emp5	4.57	0.812			
Tangibles	Tan1	3.94	0.842	0.891	0.920	0.697
	Tan2	4.15	0.841			
	Tan3	3.75	0.838			
	Tan4	3.71	0.876			
	Tan5	4.16	0.773			
Assurance	Ass1	4.41	0.732	0.882	0.914	0.679
	Ass2	4.38	0.851			
	Ass3	4.49	0.852			
	Ass4	4.40	0.848			
	Ass5	4.42	0.832			
Reliability	Rel1	4.41	0.714	0.768	0.843	0.518
	Rel2	4.29	0.656			
	Rel3	4.30	0.701			
	Rel4	4.39	0.762			
	Rel5	4.39	0.761			

Table 3. HTMT values

	Assurance	Empathy	Tangibles	Reliability
Assurance	-	-	-	-
Empathy	0.072	-	-	-
Tangibles	0.126	0.061	-	-
Reliability	0.452	0.075	0.161	-

In addition to assessing the reflective measurement model, the formative measurement model is also analyzed. The procedures include determining convergent validity, identifying the multicollinearity of indicators, and testing the statistical significance and relevance of the indicator weights (Sarstedt et al., 2021). The data analysis results indicate that in the relationship between service quality, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions, the R-squared value for satisfaction is 0.410, and the R-squared value for behavioral intentions is 0.666. Carlson and Herdman (2012) recommend a minimum threshold of 0.7 for this index. The data do not violate multicollinearity because the constructs' Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values are below 3 (Sarstedt et al., 2021). The regression weights for the constructs/indicators are statistically significant (<0.001), so the indicators are retained (Hair et al., 2022), ensuring that service quality and behavioral intentions are measured accurately.

Table 4. Results of formative measurement model analysis

Instruct/indicator	Variance inflation factor (VIF)	P-value
Assurance	1.197	0.000
Empathy	1.001	0.000
Tangibles	1.041	0.000
Reliability	1.201	0.000
Bi1	2.818	0.000
Bi2	2.818	0.000

4.1.4. Structural Model Analysis

This is the second phase of the PLS-SEM evaluation process. The importance and meaningfulness of the relationships within the structural model, along with the model's ability to explain and predict outcomes, are considered in this phase. The coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2) are the commonly suggested metrics for evaluating the structural model (Sarstedt et al., 2021). The R^2 value for the relationship between service quality and behavioral intentions and

satisfaction and behavioral intentions = 0.663 (service quality and satisfaction explain 66.3% of the variance in behavioral intentions). This value for the relationship between service quality and satisfaction = 0.409 (40.9% of the variance in satisfaction is explained by service quality). The f^2 value for the relationship between service quality and satisfaction = 0.692 (large), for the relationship between satisfaction and behavioral intentions = 0.498 (large), and for the relationship between service quality and behavioral intentions = 0.230 (medium) (Cohen, 1988). The model shows predictive relevance with $Q^2 = 0.582$ for behavioral intentions and 0.392 for satisfaction (both greater than zero) (Sarstedt et al., 2021). Indices of coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2) are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Structural model analysis results

Hypothesis	β	t-values	p-values	Decision	f^2	R^2	Q^2
H3: SAT → BI	0.533	6.221	0.000	Supported	0.498	0.663	0.582
H2: SQ → BI	0.362	4.559	0.000	Supported	0.230		
H1: SQ → SAT	0.640	13.328	0.000	Supported	0.692	0.409	0.392
H4: SQ → SAT → BI	0.341	4.939	0.000	Supported	-	-	-

All t-value exceeds 1.96, and all corresponding p-values are smaller than 0.001, so the hypotheses are supported. Therefore, a significant and positive relationship exists between service quality and satisfaction, service quality and behavioral intentions, satisfaction and behavioral intentions, and service quality and behavioral intentions through the mediating role of satisfaction.

4.2. Discussion

The primary aim of this research is to examine the relationships between service quality, satisfaction and tourists' behavioural intentions. All three of these constructs are crucial for the development of tourism. Service quality shapes the reputation, credibility, and competitiveness of businesses/destinations; therefore, the long-term success of a business/destination depends on the service quality it provides (Parasuraman et al., 1988). One of the key factors in the tourism industry is tourist satisfaction. A country's tourism revenue and the business strategies of many companies are enhanced by tourist satisfaction (Rahmiati et al., 2020). Tourists' behavioral intentions exert a considerable influence on various aspects of the tourism industry. Repeated visits and recommendations by tourists generate income and revenue for the destination, expand market presence, and reduce marketing and operational costs (Van Vuuren et al., 2012). Service quality comprises assurance, empathy, tangibles, and reliability. Among these aspects of service quality, intangible factors are more prominent than tangible ones. The five key aspects of service quality commonly discussed in the literature include reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy, and responsiveness (Canny, 2012). This shows a high level of similarity between the findings of this study and many related works (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Zeithaml et al., 1990).

Hypothesis 1 (H1) states that service quality positively contributes to tourist satisfaction. The data analysis results, with p-value = 0.000 and β = 0.640, provide sufficient grounds to confirm a linear relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction, supporting the acceptance of H1. This finding supports previous research by Abdou et al. (2022), Başarangil (2018), and Talukder et al. (2024). Therefore, destinations and businesses offering higher service quality lead to higher tourist satisfaction and vice versa.

Not only does service quality impact tourist satisfaction but it was also identified as having a significant and positive relationship with tourists' behavioral intentions (p = 0.000, β = 0.362). This indicates that Hypothesis 2 (H2) is also supported. This finding is consistent with the research conducted by Abdou et al. (2022), Habibi & Rasoolimanesh (2021), and (Talukder et al., 2024) but not consistent with research by Rahmiati et al. (2020). The above two factors have no relationship with each other. Studies supporting the positive impact of service quality on behavioral intentions suggest that destinations with better service quality increase the likelihood of customers returning and provide positive word-of-mouth recommendations. In contrast, Singh and Puri (2020) believe that the relationship between these two factors is unclear. The differences in research models, context, and methodologies contribute to this inconsistency.

Hypothesis 3 (H3) anticipated customer satisfaction positively influencing tourists' behavioral intentions. The study's findings confirm this relationship, with p = 0.000 and β = 0.533, meaning H3 is supported. This result aligns with the findings of Abdou et al. (2022), Başarangil (2018), and Talukder et al. (2024). Positive behavioral intentions from tourists increase as their satisfaction with the destination grows.

The influence of service quality on tourist behavioral intentions through the mediating role of satisfaction was also examined in this study. With p = 0.000 and β = 0.341, satisfaction partially mediates the link between service quality and behavioral intentions. The role of satisfaction as a mediator in the pathway from service quality to behavioral intentions was also validated by Abdou et al. (2022) and Lee et al. (2004).

Among the relationships examined, service quality to satisfaction, service quality to behavioral intentions, and satisfaction to behavioral intentions, the connection between service quality and satisfaction was the most robust. This was followed by the relationship between satisfaction and behavioral intentions, while the link between service quality and behavioral intentions was the weakest. These findings suggest that service quality has a more significant impact on satisfaction, which in turn strongly influences behavioral intentions.

5. Conclusion

Tourism development aims to create rapid and sustainable changes in the economy, society, and environment, and it has always been a key expectation and goal for many countries and destinations. Tourists ' service quality, satisfaction and behavioral intentions are considered essential drivers for the positive development of the tourism industry. Service quality encompasses various aspects, such as the destination image, destination attributes, and the overall offerings of the destination. It comprises factors such as assurance, empathy, tangibles, and reliability. Regarding tourists' satisfaction and behavioral intentions, service quality significantly and positively contributes to both. Satisfaction directly influences behavioral intentions and additionally acts as a mediator in the connection between service quality and behavioral intentions. The relationship between service quality and satisfaction is stronger than the relationship between satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Additionally, the relationship between satisfaction and behavioral intentions is stronger than the relationship between service quality and behavioral intentions.

To enhance satisfaction, which leads to higher behavioral intentions (such as re-visitation and recommendation intentions), several managerial implications for destination management arise from the results: (i) Forming positive attitudes and behaviors among staff and residents toward tourists (courtesy, friendliness, politeness, hospitality, quick response, attentiveness, and dedication); (ii) Establishing a synchronized system of transportation, accommodation, communication, shopping, and dining services that meet both quantity and quality standards; (iii) Ensuring security, safety, environmental cleanliness, and hygiene at the destination, along with staff's foreign language skills; (iv) Utilizing various communication channels to promote the destination's image, ensuring the quantity and quality of services, such as advertising, proper price listings, and the honesty of the staff. These managerial strategies can significantly improve tourist satisfaction and, consequently, increase the likelihood of repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth, thus contributing to the sustainable growth of the tourism destination.

This study makes several contributions to both theoretical and practical knowledge. From a theoretical perspective, this study adds value by examining the relationship between service quality, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions within the setting of an agricultural tourism destination in a developing country. Moreover, it provides observable variables to measure the dimensions of service quality, another key contribution of the paper. Practically, the study offers several implications for tourism destination management, helping stakeholders make more informed and appropriate decisions. Compared with the abovementioned studies, this study uses different scales and observed variables for the service quality construct. Furthermore, this is one of the limited studies employing partial least squares structural equation modeling to examine the hypothesis.

Besides the contributions, this study has certain limitations. Firstly, the responsiveness dimension was excluded from the service quality measurement model. Second, the research focused only on hypothesis testing. Future research could address this by adding the responsiveness aspect of the service quality evaluation framework, exploring additional constructs like perceived value and experiential value about service quality, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions. Moreover, conducting qualitative research could provide further insights for future studies.

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