

**SERVICE QUALITY IN SIT-DOWN
RESTAURANTS IN THE SOUTHERN
SUBURBS OF CAPE TOWN**

TERENCE HERMANUS

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by

T.W. HERMANUS

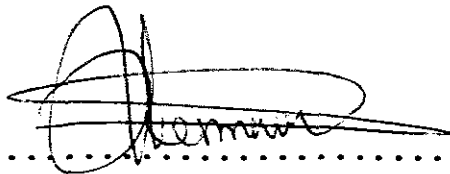
Supervisors: I.C. van der Heever (Peninsula Technikon)

Prof. M. Leibold (Stellenbosch University)

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university or technikon for a degree.

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ABSTRACT

The quality of service that is currently being offered by restaurants in the southern suburbs of Cape Town does not consistently meet with the service expectations of consumers. This results in the formulation of a negative perception of service quality. A knowledge of customer expectations is critical in delivering quality service and largely determines the success or failure of service-oriented organisations. One of the major challenges facing restaurants is meeting or exceeding the ever-increasing expectations of consumers as this determines whether consumers are satisfied or not. It is therefore important to assess the current state of service quality within restaurants.

In this study the Servqual model, which is one of the most widely used tools in measuring service quality, was used to assess the service quality within restaurants. The Servqual model is a questionnaire which can be modified in order to measure service quality within a specific service industry. The model consists of a set of twenty-two statements measuring the expectations of consumers and a matching set of twenty-two statements measuring the perceptions the consumers have of the service quality that they have been exposed to. The consumers then indicate their responses on a Likert-type scale, which accompanies each statement.

There is no immediate solution to improving the poor perception of service quality that exists, as any service quality programme is a long-term process that needs to be systematically implemented. The study proposes various recommendations to improve the quality of

service within restaurants. The most important of these being the total commitment of management and owners to the implementation of service quality programmes. More aggressive service strategies focussing on the expectations of consumers also need to be adopted. These aspects, if supported by well-trained personnel, appropriate atmospherics and pleasant facilities would contribute to the improvement of the quality of service and ultimately reduce the negative perceptions of consumers.

In order for Cape Town to be a serious contender for the Olympic Games in 2004 the city needs to improve its overall image as a popular tourist destination. As the public image of the city has been tarnished by the high crime rate and public violence, this could be off-set against the improvement of service quality standards within restaurants and hospitality organisations. This would assist Cape Town in being a successful contender for the Olympic Games.

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C O N T E N T S

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEM

There are seemingly a variety of problems that customers who frequently visit restaurants in Cape Town and the southern suburbs area experience, based on various reports and observations (The Northern Argus, 1 February 1996).

Some of these problems include customers who are exposed to abusive language by managers and customers who are overcharged. In a specific incident a customer who frequented a restaurant in the southern suburbs was verbally abused by the manager after the customer complained about the quantity of a very expensive salad, and then she was also overcharged. (The Northern Argus, 1 February 1996).

Another common problem that customers experience, is the time it takes to receive the meal after having placed the order. A local resident together with a party of tourists, for example, had a disconcerting experience at a restaurant at a popular location. They received their meal one hour after their order had been placed, this after the staff had promised at regular intervals of about fifteen minutes that their meals should be available shortly (The Sunday Argus, 7 January 1996).

Other aspects that feature strongly in the local newspapers regarding poor service quality, is that of the quality of food, customers waiting to be seated, waiting for the bill, the poor

skills of waiters and waitresses and poor partitioning of smoking and non-smoking areas.

The spate of publications in the local newspapers focussing on the poor service quality in Cape Town, especially that of sit-down restaurants is very disconcerting, bearing in mind that Cape Town is one of the bid cities for the Olympic Games in 2004 and is host to thousands of tourists each year, therefore the city can ill afford not to be well prepared for the arrival of foreign visitors, as the restaurant trade would be a very lucrative industry during this period.

The study is based on the Servqual model that has been developed by Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1990:21). The Servqual model is based on research and ten evaluative dimensions that customers use to assess service quality. The model is used extensively to measure service quality in service industries. A modified version of the model has been used to measure the service quality in the restaurant industry in the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town.

1.1.1 Development of Servqual

The Servqual instrument is used to measure a customers' perception of the service quality that the customer received. It is developed from ninety-seven items and ten dimensions that were identified in the initial research. Typical examples of some of the ninety-seven items which have been included in the ten dimensions are:

- appearance of physical facilities,
- prompt service,

- possession of skills,
- friendliness,
- understanding the customer,
- approachability and
- freedom from danger, amongst others.

Each of the ninety-seven items were converted into matching pairs of statements, one statement to measure the customers' expectations of the service quality within the service organisation, the other to measure customer perception of the service that was received. A Likert-type scale accompanied each statement, ranging from seven (strongly agree) to one (strongly disagree). This was the original model, and this model has now been refined into the Servqual model in order to eliminate many of the ninety-seven items that were unclear or ambiguous in the original model. The manner in which the Servqual model was developed will be discussed in Chapter 3.

The ten dimensions that were identified in the initial research that customers use to evaluate service quality are the following:

- tangibles,
- reliability,
- responsiveness,
- competence,
- courtesy,
- credibility,
- security,
- access,
- communication and
- understanding the customer.

According to the research of Zeithaml, et al (1990:25) in a number of service sectors and with the development of the Servqual model, the original ten dimensions were converted into the following five dimensions:

- Tangibles. Physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials.
- Reliability. Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately .
- Responsiveness. Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service.
- Assurance. Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence.
- Empathy. Caring individual attention which the firm provides for it's employees.

These dimensions are the key areas customers consider when deciding whether their expectations have been satisfied, or exceeded. These dimensions are the key factors that service providers should focus on to improve their service.

The customer-care model which is depicted in Figure 1.1 is also a model used to measure service quality and this model has been developed by Thomas (1988) in the research conducted by Evans (1989:25). The model is based on three major components that have

been identified by Albrecht and Zemke (1985) in the study by Evans (1989:25) and the components influence the moment of truth. The moment of truth is when the customer first comes into contact with the organisation and has the opportunity to form an impression (Blem, 1995:61). The three major components that influence the moment of truth are:

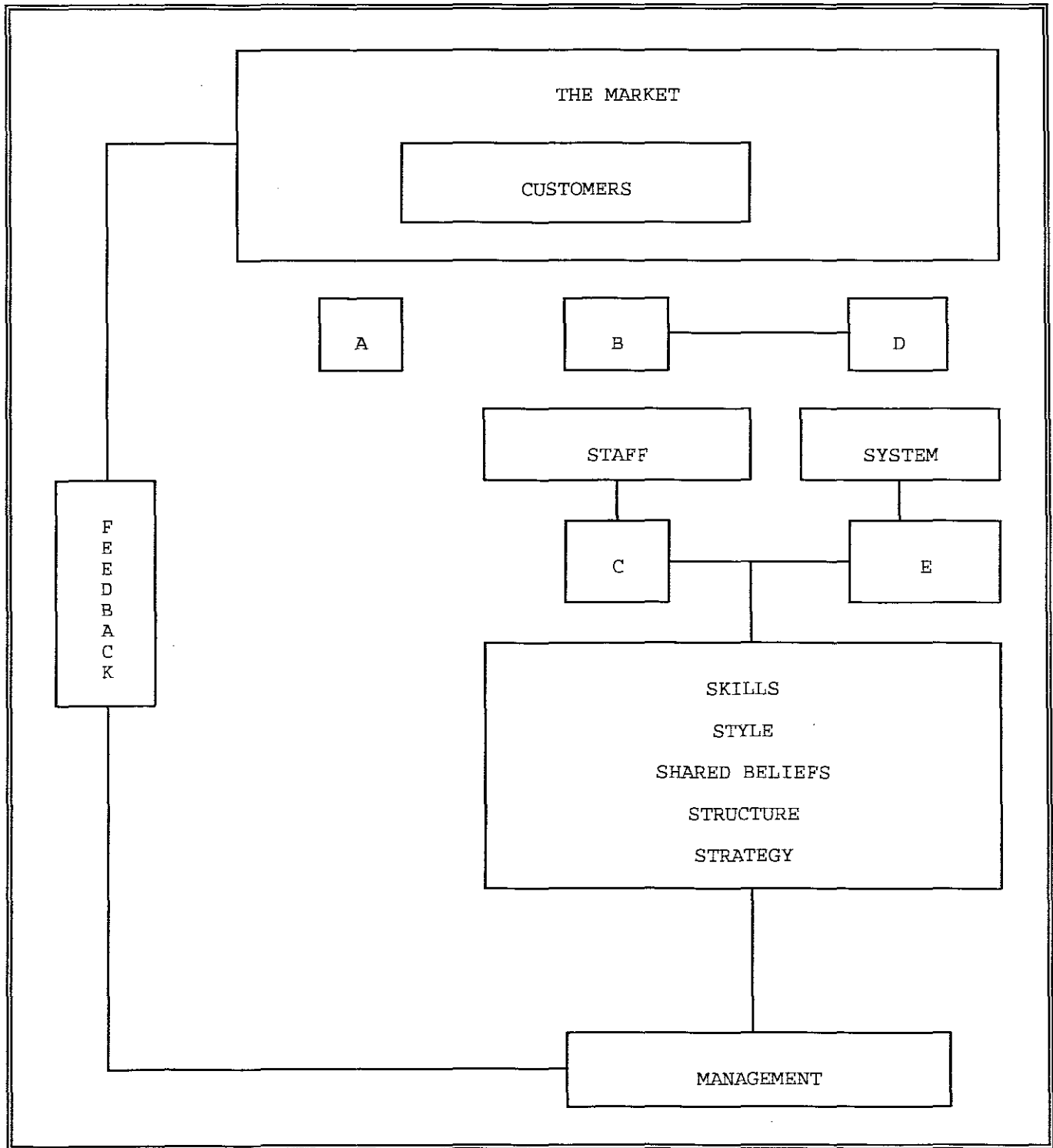
- service strategy,
- system and
- people.

The service strategy represents the manner in which the firm differentiates itself from other similar competing organisations, while the system represents the way a service is being delivered. These components have been taken and included in a customer care model along with five interfaces:

- OA - The management - customer interface.
- OB - The staff - customer interface.
- OC - The management - staff interface.
- OD - The customer - system interface.
- OE - The management - system interface.

These interfaces by Thomas (1988) (in Evans, 1989:25) seem to have a strong correlation to the gaps according to Zeithaml, et al (1990:36). Figure 1.1 illustrates the customer-care model. This model is not as specific as the Servqual model developed by Zeithaml, et al, (1990:25) and does not measure the service quality level accurately but it does allow for service quality feedback from the customers to the management of the service provider.

FIGURE 1.1 - A CUSTOMER-CARE MODEL



Source: Thomas (1988) in Evans (1989:24)

Figure 1.2 illustrates the correspondence between Servqual dimensions and the original ten dimensions for evaluating service quality.

FIGURE 1.2 - CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN SERVQUAL DIMENSIONS AND THE ORIGINAL TEN DIMENSIONS

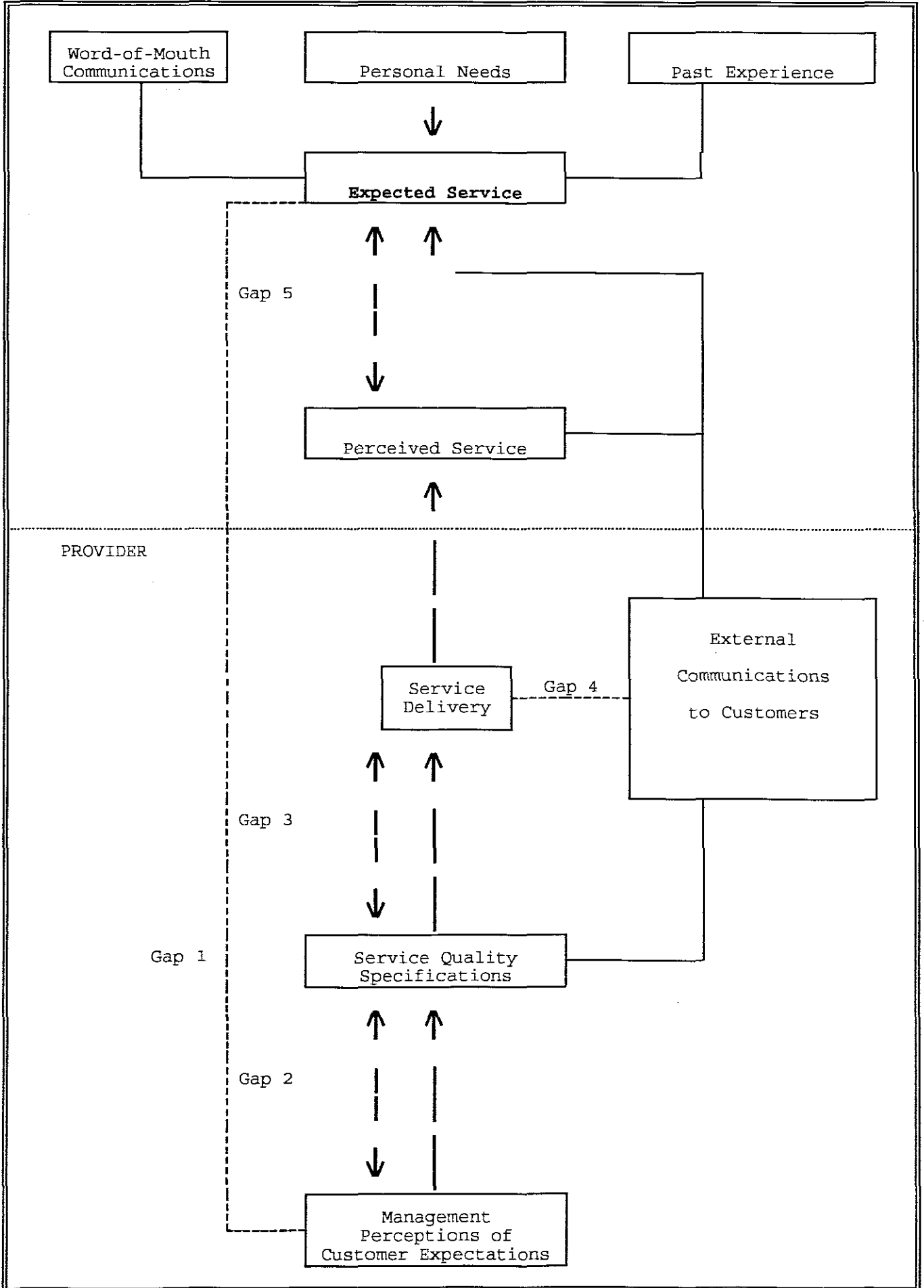
		Servqual dimensions				
Original Ten Dimensions for Evaluating Service Quality	Tangibles	Reliability	Responsiveness	Assurance	Empathy	
Tangibles						
Reliability						
Responsiveness						
Competence Courtesy Credibility Security						
Access Communication Understanding the Customer						

Source: Zeithaml, et al (1990:25)

Through the research of Zeithaml, et al, (1990:36) the difference between the expected service and the perception of the service quality that was received, was referred to as "gaps". There are four gaps which are the shortfalls within the organisation, gaps 1 to 4 and the service quality shortfall as noted by customers which is referred to as gap 5. The study focussed on gap 5 where the process begins and the extent of gap 5 was assessed.

Figure 1.3 depicts a conceptual model of service quality

FIGURE 1.3 - CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF SERVICE QUALITY



1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Cape Town is regarded as one of the cities that probably has the greatest tourism potential in the world and South Africa is also regarded as the country where there are seemingly questions about the level of service quality that is being offered. Most service sectors in the South African community regard "serving" as a menial and even a dishonourable task, whereas in other countries, serving is regarded as an honour and is done with great pleasure and satisfaction. (Sunday Argus, 28 April 1996). These are a number of attributing factors which are causing this poor service, namely:

- not knowing what our customers expect,
- poor training of staff,
- service industry employees who use this industry as a means of gaining work experience,
- students who generally use waitering as a means to finance their studies,
- taking customers for granted,
- poor management attitudes to service and
- poor products.

These are but a few of the causes of the poor service that is reportedly provided.

The service quality of sit-down restaurants is seemingly very poor and the study has identified the quality problems that exist by determining the difference between customer expectations of service and perceptions of the service quality actually received.

1.3 THE STATEMENT OF THE SUB-PROBLEMS

1.3.1 The first sub-problem

The first sub-problem is to determine the service expectations of the customer. Zeithaml, et al (1990:20) states that word of mouth communications, personal needs of the customer, past experience and external communications are the key determinants of customers' expectations.

1.3.2 The second sub-problem

The second sub-problem is the measurement of the service quality by comparing the expected service with the perception of the service quality received.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The primary objective of the empirical study is to measure the service quality of sit-down restaurants in the southern suburbs of Cape Town through the use of questionnaires.

By assessing the service quality of these restaurants, the study is able to measure the service expectations of customers.

A comparison is also conducted between the expected service and the perception of the received service to determine possible areas of improvement to reduce the size of gap 5.

The other objective of the research was to conduct an in-depth literature search in the area of service quality which represents the literary aspect of the research.

1.5 THE DELIMITATION OF THE RESEARCH

The study has been limited to the southern suburbs of Cape Town bordering between Simon's Town and Cape Town. The study focussed on areas within the southern suburbs where there are numerous sit-down restaurants. These areas would be:

- Plumstead,
- Wynberg,
- Lakeside,
- Claremont,
- Newlands and
- Rondebosch.

The restaurants that were approached in order for the survey to be conducted included the following:

- The Spur Steak ranch,
- St Elmo's pizzeria,
- Mortons,
- The Blue Plate,
- Sniffy & Dugs,
- Hildebrand,
- Bukhara,
- Rustica,
- Floris Smit Huijs,

- The Africa Cafe,
- Barristers,
- Bacini's
- Saddles,
- The Curry Tavern,
- The Brass Bell.

The restaurants included in the sample were sit-down restaurants including family restaurants with take-away facilities but not take-away restaurants with sit-down facilities.

The focus of the study was on the initial service quality offered to the customer. If poor service was offered and the corrective measures were taken these measures have not been included in the study.

1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS

1.6.1 QUALITY

There has been considerable debate about the term "Quality" and the search for quality is arguably one of the most important consumer trends of the 1980's. This proves that quality is a fundamental element in the survival and success of a service provider's organisation.

Quality remains an elusive and indistinct construct, it is not only important for the success of organisations, but also for that of countries and one cannot help but use the Japanese as a prime example.

The Japanese have identified seven key activities to improving

service quality:

- Define your corporate mission in terms of customer service.
- Gain the commitment of senior management.
- Select the right people.
- Train and retrain.
- Measure and communicate quality standards.
- Use technology to enhance customer satisfaction.
- Creatively exceed customer expectations.

The major difference between Japanese companies and their western counterparts may be the greater commitment from Japanese employees on all customer levels to enhance customer satisfaction in every conceivable way (Turpin, 1994:32).

Quality means the ability of a product or service to satisfy a customer's needs or requirements in the study by Jooste, Schreuder & Grove (1993:240), and this view is shared by Bouman & van der Wiele (1992:5).

Deming, the originator of quality management (in Borlind-Loewen, 1992:22) states that quality is "the predictable absence of error" which was later revised to "fitness for purpose" recognising that there were two elements to quality, namely, freedom from deficiencies but also meeting customer's needs. Here the customer dimension is introduced which is absent in the production-oriented definitions.

Borlind-Loewen (1992:23) mentions: "We do not just want to satisfy the customer, we want to seduce them, make them shiver with desire".

This definition probably epitomises that there is definitely more to quality than keeping the customer satisfied and service providers can no longer simply do enough just to satisfy the consumer.

Quality for one service provider does not necessarily imply that the same quality standard would be acceptable for the next service provider. Elfassy (1991:17) states: "Service quality is perception driven and dependent on variables such as background, experience, personal needs, behaviour, attitudes and motivation." This phenomenon is especially applicable to our sample population in the southern suburbs of Cape Town, as there is a wide range of population groups residing in this area, from professional persons to illiterate persons, therefore quality continues to remain subjective.

1.6.2 CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS

Irrespective of the type of service industry, any customer "expects" certain service standards. Woodruffe (1995:125) identifies three levels of service namely:

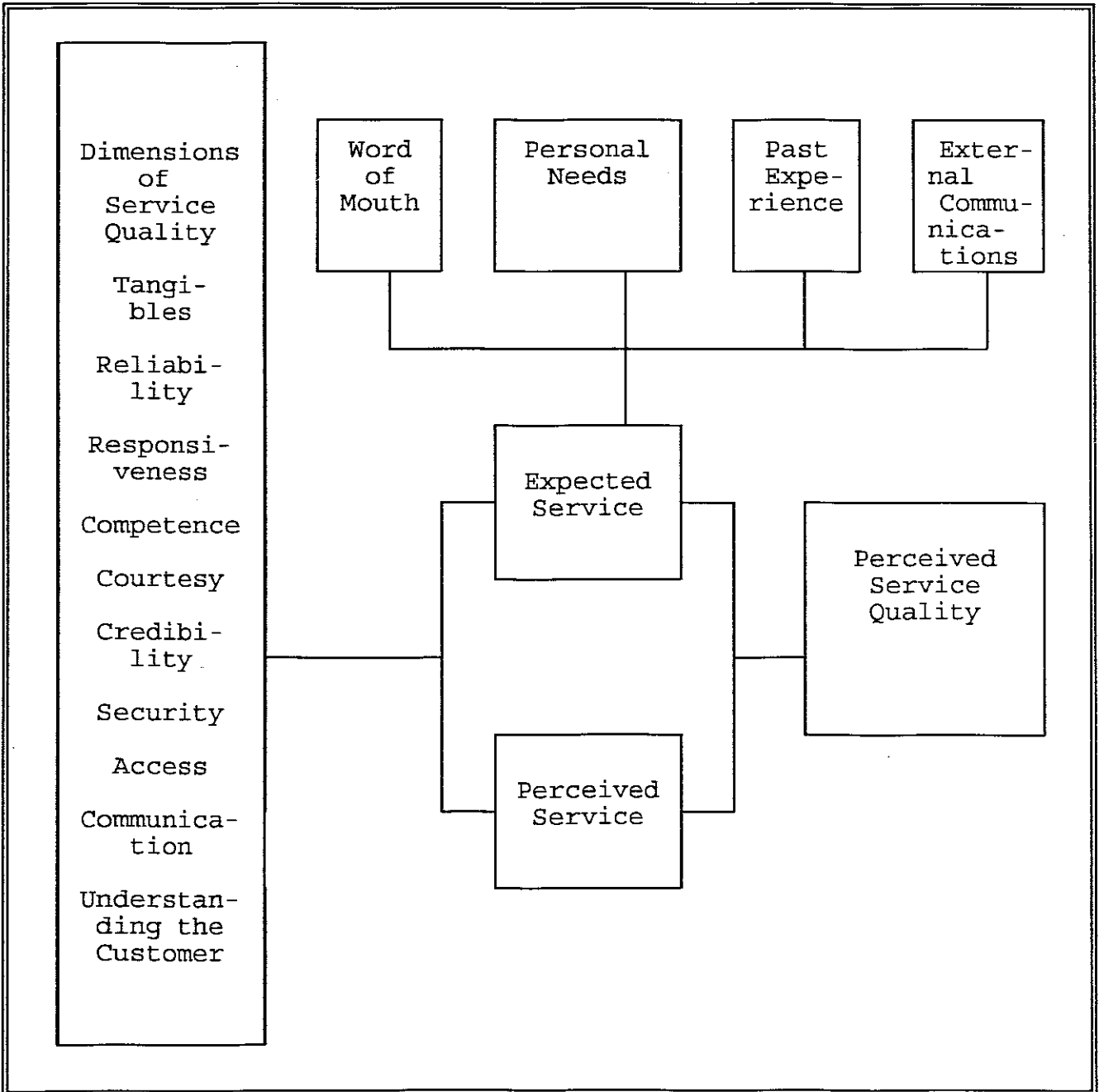
- the core service - this relates specifically to the customers' need, for example the customer feeling hungry.
- the expected service - these are the customers' expectations of what services are available to satisfy this need, for example what is on the menu.
- The augmented service - here the service provider attempts to differentiate himself from similar competitors. This could be achieved through live entertainment while

enjoying your meal.

The first level cannot be controlled, therefore the second level, that is the expected service, is the level that has been focussed on. If this level is running smoothly, the customer should receive at least satisfactory service.

Customers have perceived service expectations that have been influenced by past experiences and the various other factors that have been mentioned earlier. If performance is below expectation, they are dissatisfied; if performance equals expectations they are satisfied; and if performance exceeds customers' expectations they are very pleased and even excited (Blem, 1994:24). Figure 1.4 illustrates a customers' assessment of service quality according to Zeithaml, et al (1990:23).

FIGURE 1.4 - A CUSTOMER'S ASSESSMENT OF SERVICE QUALITY



Source: Zeithaml, et al (1990:23)

Zeithaml, et al (1990:36) shares a very similar view on customer expectations. They however took it one step further by stating that these service quality shortfalls are gaps, therefore the the smaller the gap when expectations exceed perceptions, the higher the level of customer service provided. The larger the gap when perceptions exceed expectations, the higher the level of customer service.

Customer expectations as viewed from a service quality perspective according to Oliver (1981) in the findings of Borlind-Loewen (1992:25) is viewed as " what the company should offer to their client rather than what they would offer." The expected service level offered by the service provider therefore determines the customers' perception of the service quality received. It is therefore imperative that before auxillary services are offered that the "basics" are at least offered, to ensure that if no auxillary services are offered the customer will leave satisfied.

Customer expectations are not constant and as customers are exposed more often to the key factors the expected service level will increase, while the quality of service could remain unchanged, therefore the perception of the service quality received deteriorates. This results in the widening of gap 5.

Pitt (1990:17-19) says: "Understanding what customers expect is a critical pre-requisite for delivery quality service." The survival or failure of a business could be strongly influenced by this aspect and it could result in considerable savings for the service provider if he has this knowledge.

1.6.3 SERVICE QUALITY

There are many definitions of service quality, which will be discussed under the "Review of the related literature". However, the study has found the definition of Lewis and Booms (in Tal, 1991:7) the most appropriate. "..... a measure of how well the service level delivered matches customer expectations. Delivering

quality service means conforming to customer expectations on a consistent basis".

This definition clearly indicates that, even though the customer's expectations are met, if the service provider does this "well" the service quality received would be perceived as being "good". If the service provider does not meet the customers' expectations very well, then the perceived service would be seen as being "poor". The service quality delivered should also be consistent in order for the customer to know what type of service to expect when he frequents a restaurant.

1.6.4 QUALITY PROBLEMS

These are the internal problems within the service provider's organisation that are causing, or are contributing to the inability of restaurants to consistently meet customer expectations.

These internal problems have earlier been identified as being gap 1 to gap 4 (See Figure 1.2 on p.6). Gap 1 is the difference between what the customers' expect and what management perceives the customer expect (Parasuraman et al, 1990:51). Gap 2 is the discrepancy between the managers' perception of customers' expectations and what service standards are established to achieve this. Gap 3 is the difference between the standards or specifications set down by management and the service actually delivered by employees. Gap 4 is the fourth major cause of poor service quality and is often viewed by consumers in a very serious light. These are the promises made by the service providers and

what service is actually delivered to the customer.

1.6.5 SIT-DOWN RESTAURANTS

The format of this type of restaurant is that meals are prepared while the customers are seated and the meals are consumed on the premises. The processing and delivery of the orders are handled by waiters and waitresses.

1.7 ASSUMPTIONS

Customers who frequent restaurants expect a certain level of service quality. This service quality is not at a very high level because of the regular exposure to poor service quality.

There has been patrons within a particular restaurant who received good quality service, while there were other patrons who received very poor quality service.

It is also assumed that all restaurants strive to deliver satisfactory customer levels in order to ensure that their customers receive good value for their money.

The assumption is also made that all sit-down restaurants employ waiters and waitresses and all the meals that are ordered have been consumed on the premises.

1.8 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

For 1996, over three-hundred thousand tourists are expected to visit Cape Town (Cape Times, 24 December 1995). It is generally believed that the world stayed away because of apartheid and that tourists are now all waiting to visit South Africa and Cape Town. According to statistics Cape Town only attracts about a sixth as many tourists as Australia (Cape Times, 05 January 1996). Cape Town's prices are more expensive than the south-east Asian countries. The crime and violence rate is also higher than in most competing nations and perhaps most disturbing of all, service culture is underdeveloped. In addition to this, the locals are tolerant of poor service and seldom make their dissatisfaction with the poor service known.

If the three-and-a-half-million locals cannot deliver satisfactory service quality to about three-hundred thousand tourists, looking ahead to the 2004 Olympic Games, should Cape Town be successful in their bid, the consequences could be disastrous when we expect millions of tourists to visit Cape Town. If we improve our service, it would greatly improve Cape Town's chances of being a contender for the Olympic Games, but based on our current level of service being offered, our bid needs to be reconsidered.

South African consumers are slow to complain, which actually handicaps our organisations in customer satisfaction at even a Third World standard (Borlind-Loewen, 1991:13). This lulls service providers into a false sense of belief that they are providing good customer service, while they are actually unaware of their service quality shortfalls.

This situation creates problems for the locals and tourists, because the restaurant industry has to continuously arrange advertising campaigns and promotions to attract new customers. It is far more expensive to attract new customers than it is to maintain existing customers. If existing customers were maintained and they developed a sense of loyalty towards a restaurant, the savings on promotions and advertising campaigns could be enjoyed by the customer, as he would receive better value for money. This could only be possible if the quality problems be brought to the attention of the service provider and the corrective measures are taken.

If the service quality problems were rectified and a few restaurants started delivering excellent service quality, customers would start realising what good service quality is. When they receive poor service quality from other restaurants, they may reject the poor service they receive. These restaurants would then be obligated to improve their service in order to remain competitive and maintain their market shares.

Should Cape Town's service culture improve, it would enhance the city's image as a major tourist attraction and together with our bid for the Olympic Games would result in social and economic upliftment for Cape Town and the surrounding areas.

1.9 REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Should customers receive bad service at a restaurant they will seldom complain about it. The customer will simply not patronise that particular restaurant again.

Service quality continues to remain an elusive concept and nobody has really claimed to have a perfect definition to this subjective concept because quality for one customer might not mean quality for another customer.

Service quality was evaluated by Quin (1992:17) in terms of technical and functional qualities. Technical quality is the technical ability or know-how that a company possesses. It is an objective assessment of technical skills, mechanisation and computerisation. Functional quality is the manner in which the service is delivered. It is a subjective assessment comprising attitudes, internal relations, behaviour, appearance, accessibility and actual customer interface. He was first to report that service quality depends on two variables, namely expectations and perceptions.

As stated earlier, in the definition of service quality as found by Tal (1991:7), suggested that service quality is a measure of how well standards of the service delivered match customer expectations. Delivering quality service means conforming to customer expectations on a consistent basis and this view is shared by Crosby (1991: 16-19). These definitions, who together with Zeithaml, et al (1990:19) defined service quality as: "The extent of discrepancy between customers' expectations or desires and their perceptions," are probably the most comprehensive of the definitions mentioned.

The expectations of customers and their evaluation of the service quality that they receive, which results in perceptions being formulated about service quality, is common in many of the

definitions of service quality that have been identified thus far.

Mashupye (1993:145) is rather critical of most attempts to define service quality. It is believed that too much emphasis has been placed on general criteria and that the concept should instead be defined in more specific terms and in a multi-dimensional manner. Furthermore, it is stated that service quality is a holistic concept influenced to a considerable extent by cultural considerations. The latter entails both culture in which the service is produced and the cultural background of customers. This again indicates that service quality is subjective and the expectations of customers depend on factors over which the service provider has little or no control.

Zeithaml, et al (1990:20) took this a step further by identifying four common factors affecting and influencing customer expectations, namely: word of mouth communication, personal needs of customers, past experience with using a service, external communications as well as price which is subsumed under external communications.

1.10 METHODOLOGY

A literature survey was conducted and the focus of the search was in the area of service quality. This is the study's main source of secondary data, including a literature search of relevant newspaper and journal articles.

The empirical study entailed a descriptive method of research and the primary data that has been collected was done using personal questionnaires consisting of a modified version of the Servqual

model. These modifications will be discussed in Chapter 3. The study is therefore a replicative study, using the Servqual model which has been designed to measure service quality in the restaurant industry.

Approximately 180 respondents were requested to complete the questionnaire immediately after they have eaten their meals or just before they were about to leave the restaurant. The profile of the respondent is not very specific as all customers in the region of 18 years and older were approached and requested to complete the questionnaire. There has been no gender discrimination and if the respondent did not understand any English then the questionnaire was withheld.

The primary data that has been collected in the empirical investigation is:

- 1) the consumer expectations that exist with specific reference to restaurant service.
- 2) the customer's perception of the received service quality.

1.11 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

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CHAPTER 2

THE NATURE OF SERVICE AND SERVICE QUALITY

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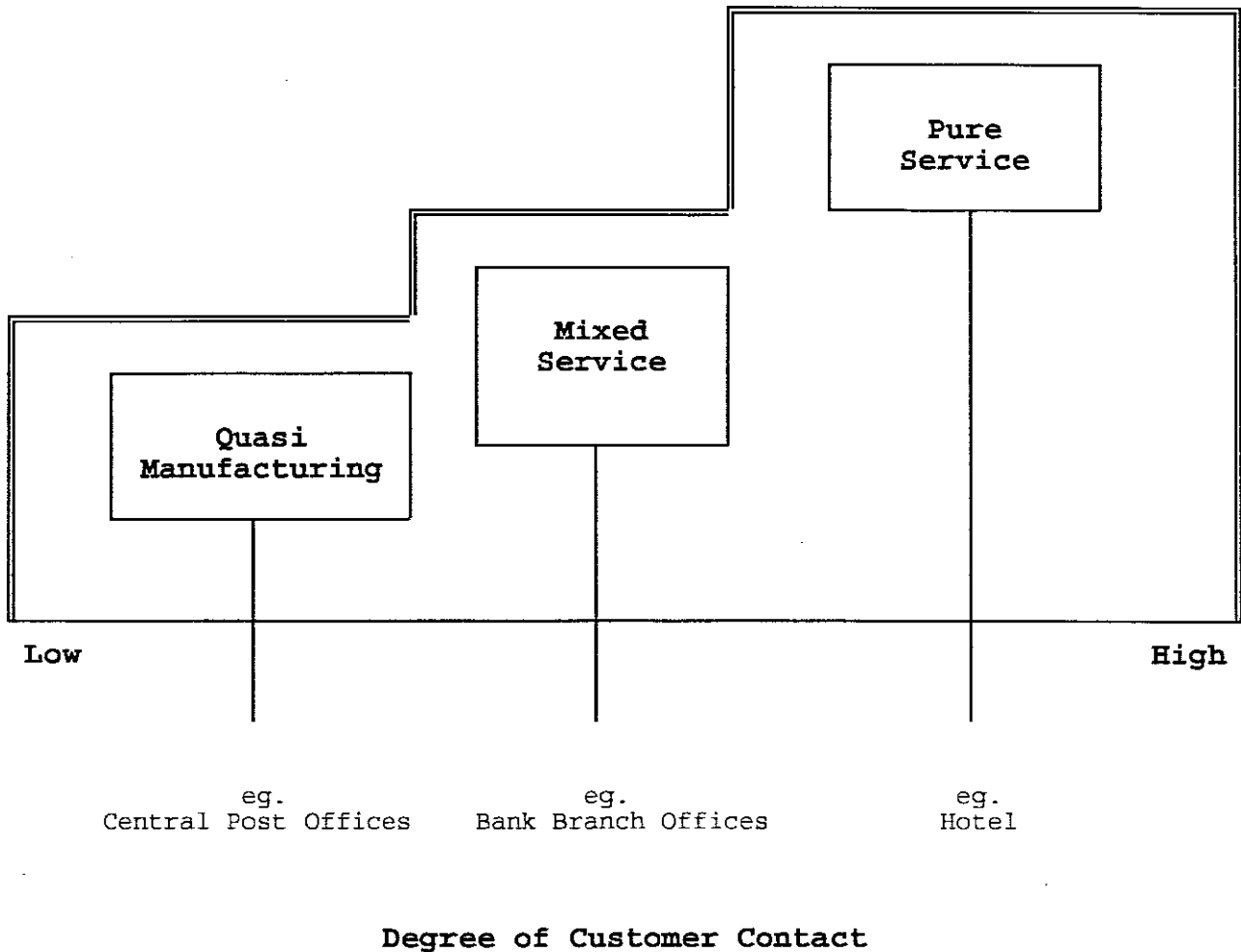
THE NATURE OF SERVICE AND SERVICE QUALITY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

There is seemingly an attitude among service providers in Cape Town that good customer service is not crucial to their survival or success in the competitive business environment in which they operate. They tend to believe that there will always be customers who will be willing to patronise their organisations, irrespective of the quality of service that they provide. This leads to companies offering ordinary, if not dissatisfactory service. Certain companies and small business operators seem to believe that, due to the nature of their business, customer service is not essential. This is very rarely true as even the small business vendor selling fruit and vegetables is required to render customer service in one form or another. If the vendor uses abusive language or should the vendor not put the customers' fruit and vegetables into clean packets, he will not enjoy the customer's support in future.

Figure 2.1 illustrates how, depending on the nature of your business, your degree of customer contact is influenced.

FIGURE 2.1 - CHASE'S CUSTOMER CONTACT MODEL

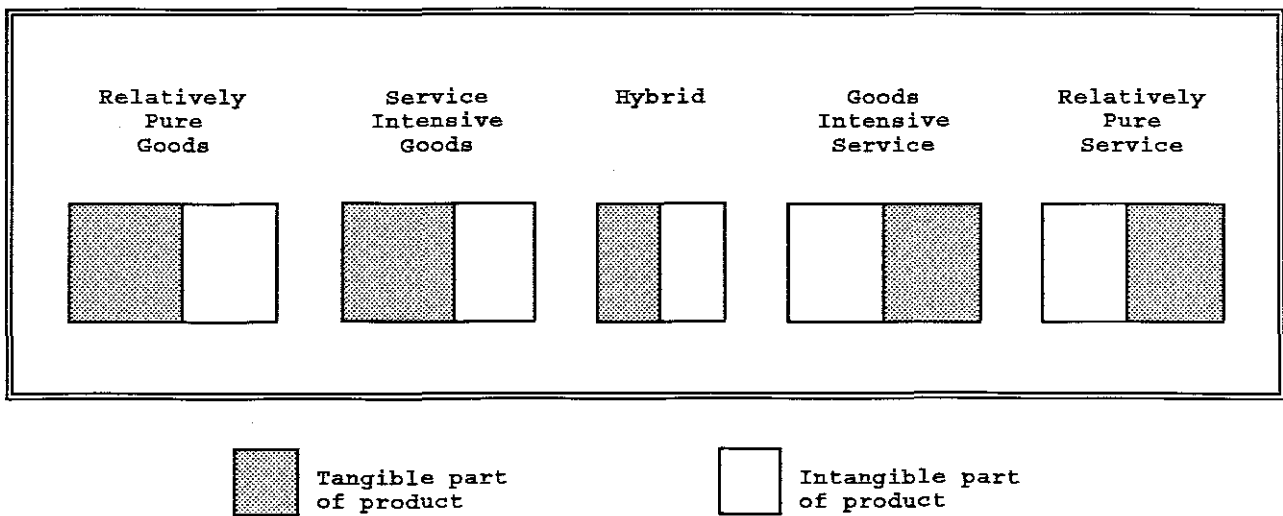


Source: Adapted from Pitt & Staude, 1991:3

The example of the street vendor selling fruit and vegetables and offering very little service, raises the question as to whether the concept of a pure goods organisation or a pure service organisation really exists. Shostack (in Pitt, 1989:233) states that a "pure service" or "pure product" does not exist, as all products have certain service characteristics and as in the restaurant industry there are also tangible products that are part of the service offering, namely the meals and beverages. There are also the tangible products associated with certain services, a typical

example that would illustrate this type of business format would be a laundromat which essentially is a service retailer, however, they do provide certain tangible products, namely, selling various washing powders and soaps. Figure 2.2 depicts the goods-service spectrum.

FIGURE 2.2 - THE GOODS-SERVICE SPECTRUM



Source: Adapted from Pitt, 1989:1

Generally the needs of customers are changing and their expectations are also increasing as service providers are competing against each other for the patronage of these customers in order to maintain their market share. According to Manning (1989:9) companies are attempting to differentiate themselves by doing the following:

- Improving the quality of their products.
- Cutting prices.
- Slashing costs.
- Extending distribution.
- Introducing automation.

- Building brands.
- Restructuring and downsizing.

These companies which are attempting to differentiate themselves in various unique ways, seem to be missing one important element, namely, the necessary attention customer service deserves due to the vital role it plays in customer satisfaction.

The importance of the customer and customer satisfaction are often overlooked, as the entire business revolves around the customer, one would expect customers to be the focal point of any customer service strategy. Many companies who are attempting to differentiate themselves from other similar competing companies are seldom driven by good customer service. Drucker (in Manning, 1989: 27) states that the first priority of business is to create and keep a customer, and this should be the focus area of service providers.

The South African consumer is very familiar with the old cliché: "The customer is king". This business motto is very seldom adhered to as South African consumers have to contend with poor customer service on a daily basis.

Davis (in Pitt & Staude, 1991:1) states that in most countries and even in some third world nations, there has been a shift from a manufacturing-oriented economy to one that is more service dominated. Typically the production and delivery of services involves considerable contact between the organisation and the customer.

2.2 A DESCRIPTION OF SERVICE

According to Blem (1995:6) there are many definitions of service and it could mean being friendly, delivering on time or attending promptly to customer's needs. Blem embraces many of the definitions into a fairly concise definition, namely: "Service refers to all activities which create a bond between organisations and their clients or customers."

Lewison (1994:28) defines service as all of the features, acts, and information that augment the customer's ability to realize the potential value of a core product or service. A similar view is also shared by Berman & Evans (1995:20).

There seems to be very little difference in the focus of these two definitions in that Blem's definition includes all activities that involve the customer and the organisation and the bond that exists between these two aspects. Lewison, together with Berman & Evans, mentions that service is those activities that support or complement the service provider or the goods that have been sold to the customer, for example, home delivery, packaging and parking.

Kotler (in Pitt 1992:1) defines a service as any act or performance that one party can offer to another that is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything, and its production may or may not be tied to a physical product.

Edvardsson, Thomasson & Øvretveit (1994:14) mention that service is not a uniform concept. There are major differences between, for

example, professional consultancy services and cleaning services. Despite these differences, there are certain general characteristics in services, namely:

- The customer often participates directly and actively in the production process as co-producer. Therefore it is important that service staff and customers can have effective dialogue. The relationship between staff and customers is therefore extremely important when delivering service.
- Do-it-yourself production systems and customer education play an important part in most services.
- Services are often abstract and therefore difficult for the customer to either explain or to assess.
- Many non-standardised services are very closely linked to the service provider as a person. For some services the people involved in delivering the service are in essence the service.
- Services are often made up of a set of services/products. The customer assesses the whole. The value, quality and attractiveness of services depend on the customer's perception as a whole.

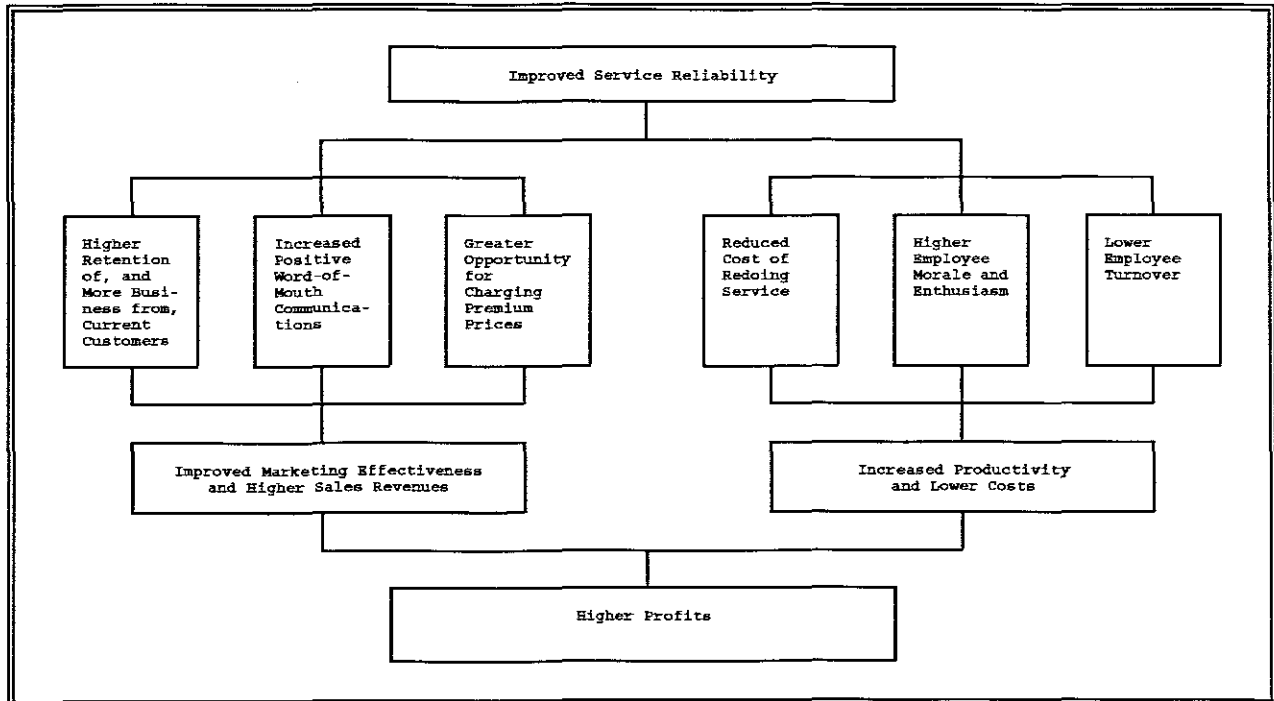
Berry & Parasuraman (1991:15) states that when services are performed they need to be performed accurately and dependably. This

will result in the customer knowing what to expect when he enters a restaurant. This also assists the consumer when faced with the decision of what restaurant he will frequent. Should the customer have patronised a particular restaurant and the service there was satisfactory or it exceeded his expectations, there is a strong possibility that this particular restaurant would enjoy his support once more. This loyal customer could very easily be lost to the competition if service quality is not reliable or dependable. Therefore, service quality standards need to be consistent in their presentation to customers.

It was stated in Chapter 1 that there are five general dimensions that customers used to evaluate a company's service quality. Therefore, reliability is not the sole determinant in service quality evaluations. The other dimensions will be discussed in Chapter 3.

If a company provides service that is reliable and consistent, the company would build a reputation for service excellence. Figure 2.3 illustrates the potential benefits of service reliability.

FIGURE 2.3 - POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF SERVICE RELIABILITY



Source: Berry and Parasuraman (1989:18)

It has been found that should a company differentiate itself through consistent service reliability there are significant marketing benefits that will be enjoyed (Berry & Parasuraman, 1989:17). The benefits are:

- higher current customer retention rates,
- reduced pressure to engage in expensive efforts to recruit new customers,
- more business from current customers,
- increased word of mouth communications in promoting the

company,

- and a greater opportunity for demanding a higher price.

Whether an organisation is delivering good or reliable service quality or not is difficult to measure in a precise manner due to the nature and characteristics of services. Woodruffe (1995:105) identifies the following characteristics that impact on the measurement of service quality:

- Intangibility - results in many services being difficult to measure or assess.
- Inseparability - of the service itself from the service provider, this highlights the role of people in the service transaction.
- Heterogeneity - service is never exactly repeated and always varies to some extent.
- Perishability - if the service is provided and the customer is not present the service that has been provided is lost.

Therefore, to measure service quality to determine whether good service quality was offered the user of the service needs to be consulted in order to assess the service quality level. The study

will attempt to measure service quality through an empirical investigation. Irrespective of the results of the study, service quality will continue to remain a subjective concept.

2.3 QUALITY SERVICE

Before the discussion of whether a service that has been provided could be classified as either "good service" or "quality service", it needs to be stated again that this is merely a perception and this perception of the nature of service quality varies from person to person. Service providers are therefore led by the customer's perception of what good quality is and this is not an easy task as quality is always measured against expectation. If the expectations are exceeded then the service is perceived to be good, however, the opposite is true if the expectations are not met.

According to Anderson & Zemke (1988:12) "good service" is a thing of the past. The definition of good service has become more concrete and organisations are making distinctions that are real and specific, and they are picking out one aspect to set themselves apart from the competition.

Molapo (1995:1) states that you cannot differentiate your organisation through good service by motivating your employees to

smile and thank customers, this is a form of service and the "substance" of service goes much deeper than this. He also mentions that South African companies are all claiming that their service is unique, however, only a few changes have actually taken place, because many companies are still operations - focussed and not customer-oriented.

Good service is more than the pursuit of standardisation, it is a state of mind. The individual service provider needs to be convinced of the need to provide quality, both personally and in the wider organisational context. If the service provider does not believe in this concept all the service quality surveys and customer care surveys will not make effective service quality happen (Glynn, 1996:4).

Gronroos (in Edvardsson, Thomasson & Øvretveit, 1994:86) produced a list of six criteria of service quality that will be perceived as being "good". According to Zeithaml, et al (1990:25) there is also a strong correlation between the dimensions of service quality and the following criteria:

- **Professionalism and skills**

The customers realise that the service providers' operational systems, physical resources and well trained employees have the knowledge and the skills required to

solve their problems in a professional way.

- **Attitudes and behaviour**

The customers feel that the service employees (contract staff) are concerned about them and interested in solving their problems in a friendly and spontaneous way.

- **Accessibility and flexibility**

The customers feel that the service provider, his location, operating hours, employees and operational systems are designed to ensure that the service that they provide is easily accessible. They also believe that service providers are prepared to adjust to the demands and wishes of the customer in a flexible way.

- **Reliability and trustworthiness**

The customers know that, whatever takes place or has been agreed upon, they can be sure that their best interests were kept at heart by the service provider.

- **Recovery**

The customers realise that when things do not go according

to plan, the service provider will take corrective action.

- **Reputation and credibility**

The customers believe that the operations of the service provider can be trusted and they will receive good value for their money.

Manning (1989:62) has also identified basic factors that almost all customers seek when buying products and services, namely:

- Their expectations must be met.
- They want to be treated with respect.
- They want to be heard.
- They want to feel that you're on their side.
- They want enough information to firstly make sensible buying decisions and secondly to be able to use the product or service properly.

In addition to this Manning states four basic principles of superior service, namely:

- Everything you do must drive value up and costs down.

- Customer care is everybody's business.

- Top management must make it happen.

- Superior customer service takes a total onslaught.

Manning (1989:69) mentions that efforts to improve customer service often fail because these are seen as a programme rather than a process. This view is shared by Molapo (1995:1). It is seen here that, in order to offer good service quality, you need to ensure that staff support top management. The importance of everybody being totally committed to the process cannot be emphasized enough.

Anderson and Zemke (1991:73) has taken good service a step further by indicating what constitutes good service, in their publication: "Knock your socks off service". They claim that exceptional service is making sure of the finer details. These finer details could consist of what our workplace looks like, how we speak and what we say. Namely, those extra courtesies and comforts that are built into the service experience. Attention to detail is a prime characteristic of high-performing organisations. This is critical for

restaurants, as it is one of the few means which they have at their disposal for differentiating themselves from the competition. The following are examples of the finer detail in good service: the manager personally inspects the tables before patrons are seated or checks the seating arrangements, ensuring that customers are correctly seated in either a smoking or non-smoking section or simply ensuring that they have been attended to by a waiter once they have been seated. These extra benefits will be what makes the difference between ordinary service and superior service.

2.4 IMPLEMENTING QUALITY SERVICE

As mentioned, great service is a very effective method of differentiating your organisation from similar competing organisations. However, many organisations do not know how to achieve this. Using courtesy, as stated earlier, is not adequate in itself, or by stating in advertisements that your organisation offers great service. Using advertisements results in an increase in the customer's expectations, and when the delivered service falls short, the service is perceived as being poor. This affects the morale of employees adversely as they then disregard management's commitment to service quality (Bennet & Higgins, 1988:46).

Szpekman (in H.R. Magazine, 1992:73) mentions, that in order to set your organisation apart from competition, some of the following

factors need to be implemented:

- Empower employees - allow employees to use their initiative and improvise as this would improve their confidence.

- Delegate authority to the lower ranks - this sends a clear signal of management's commitment to service excellence.

- Provide appropriate technology - provide customer service representatives with the necessary technology to perform their tasks.

- Treat customer service representatives like important customers - show employees respect and sensitivity and they will tend to treat customers the same way.

- Reward employees - these rewards need not only be financial in nature but can also be in the form of recognition through awards.

- Invest in the right people - recruit, select and develop

service employees to take broad, meaningful responsibilities.

The right people or staff is possibly the most important aspect of improving quality service and this view is shared by many authors. No longer are the corporate heroes top managers, you need to have the support of all employees, the emphasis must shift now to everyone as heroes (Androne, 1988:12).

Manning (1989:37) states that customer service and quality is everybody's business, both must be a way of life, rather than short-term projects, that can be started and stopped at will. Both must be seen as part of the same process.

Japanese firms live by a quality code, where quality is viewed as a philosophy rather than a technique. The Japanese take a holistic approach to improvement and balance their long-term objectives and short-term objectives.

Garvin (in Manning 1989:38) mentions that Japanese companies deliver superior quality and reliability through "a carefully orchestrated campaign of micro and macro policies, top management involvement, and shop floor activities". This view is echoed by Cannie and Caplin (1991:67) stating that focussing an organisation on customers

is not just a matter of declaring a new policy, it involves strategies, systems priorities, attitudes and behaviours; in short, the culture of the organisation.

If an organisation is to be successful in changing its ways, firstly, somebody has to show that this is possible and secondly, there must be a motivating factor sufficiently powerful to elicit commitment.

Creating a new service orientation in an organisation usually involves a great deal of change, which requires explanation of the service strategy to all employees. Every member of staff should understand that service to the customer is the most important contributor to the company's success (Blem, 1995:88).

Blem also echoes the importance of management involvement in order to show that service quality programmes can be done. Berry and Parasuraman (1991:187) lists ten essential attitude shifts for improving service quality. Figure 2.4 illustrates these ten essential attitude shifts for improving service quality.

FIGURE 2.4 - TEN ESSENTIAL ATTITUDE SHIFTS FOR IMPROVING SERVICE QUALITY

FROM	TO
Being good	Being excellent
Quality of products	Quality in everything
Management support	Management involvement
Functional isolationism	Team energy
Quality is someone else's concern	Quality is my concern
Some employees have customers	All employees have customers
Recovery as a problem	Recovery as an opportunity
Errors are inevitable	Doing it right every time
Service is shapeless	Service-system design
Quality-improvement programs	Continuous improvement

Source: Berry & Parasuraman (1991:187)

2.5 CUSTOMER LOYALTY

As mentioned earlier in the study, service organisations generally strive to achieve customer loyalty, thus ensuring that the organisation's long term future is more sound, also enjoying the repeat business offered by loyal customers.

However, to build customer loyalty is not an isolated task and it is an integral part of every business. There must be a strong sense of direction and urgency when developing customer loyalty programmes, otherwise staff will not be committed to the programme and they will lose interest after an initial burst of enthusiasm (Linton, 1993:9).

A few of the strategies that managers can implement to introduce

customer loyalty programmes into their organisations in order to maintain the momentum of these programmes are to:

- make customer loyalty a priority so that everyone in the organisation is aware of its importance;
- get top-level commitment to ensure adequate funding;
- set standards so that staff understand what they have to achieve to build customer loyalty and
- rank customer requirements to ensure that the company's resources are concentrated on the most productive tasks.

These are only a few of the strategies that managers can implement to ensure that customer loyalty is achieved. The "staff dimension" of these strategies is of fundamental importance if such a programme is to achieve success, as it is essential for staff members to voluntarily commit themselves to the programme and in doing this it would ensure the success of the programme.

2.6 CRITICAL INCIDENTS

A "critical incident" is a special, problematic, delicate or unpleasant incident which affects a customer's perception of the quality of the service. It is something that "crystallises a customer's perception of the quality of a service - something which they can feel and remember and which, for them symbolises the service" (Øvretreit in Edvardsson, et al, 1994:36).

"Critical incidents" are often encounters with the customer which go wrong, but they can also be encounters which satisfy the customer because staff give higher service or simply do that little something that is not really required of them, especially in difficult circumstances. Critical incidents are the high and low spots in an otherwise unremarkable or unnoticable service. A critical incident is often the final trigger which causes the customer to complain.

Generally, few customers complain, and as managers who only listen to complaints managers are missing most of the problems that exist within their organisations. Service providers need to actively seek out dissatisfied customers and make it easier for a customer to lodge a complaint and then actively listen to these complaints. However, listening to the complaints is easy, the difficult part is taking the corrective measures to ensure that these problems are solved.

The customer's perception of quality is often affected more by how staff deal with their dissatisfaction and complaints than by the incident itself. It is the service provider's response to the customer's complaint which reveals the reality of quality service (Edvardsson, et al, 1994:137). It is under these circumstances that the customer is more likely to formulate a perception of the quality of service based on the manner in which the incident is handled. These "incidents" surpass the "moments of truth" that have been mentioned earlier in terms of creating an impression about the company. Such situations tend to remain in the customer's memory for a longer period of time, as opposed to others.

Service providers should not view these critical incidents as major problems, they should rather be viewed as ideal opportunities to create a favourable impression by delivering good service quality.

2.7 SERVICE RECOVERY

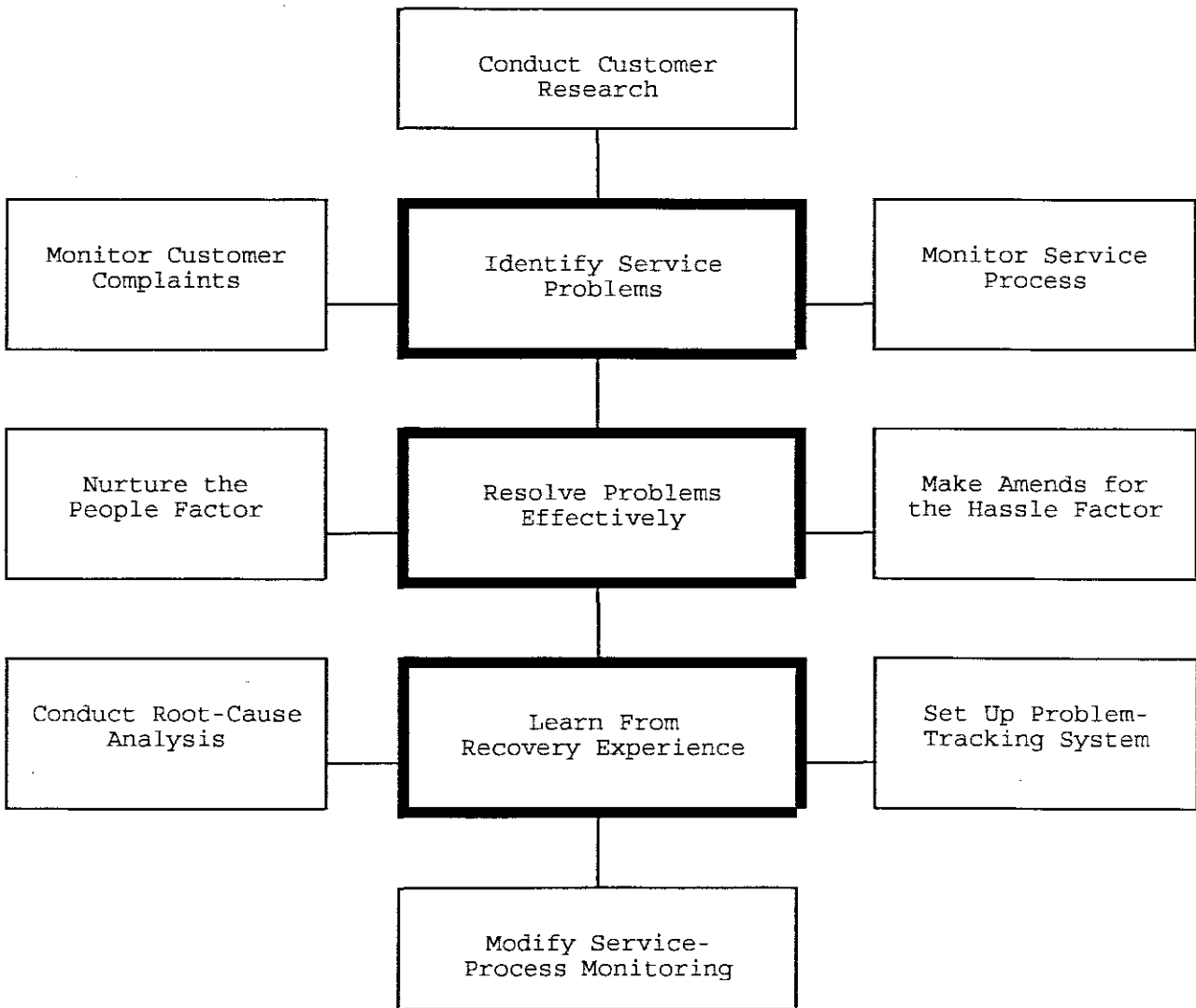
Service recovery usually occurs after the critical incident has taken place and it could therefore be seen as the corrective action or measures that are taken so that the customer is no longer dissatisfied with the service quality that has been offered.

Critical incidents is often perceived as being unpleasant interruptions that are unproductive and unprofitable. As a result of this service recovery has a low priority status (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991:42).

To excel in service recovery from critical incidents, service providers must have in place a systematic, continuous recovery process.

The following are a few general components that should be included in every recovery process. Figure 2.5 depicts the essentials of effective service recovery.

FIGURE 2.5 - ESSENTIALS OF SERVICE RECOVERY



Source: Berry and Parasuraman (1991:42)

2.8 MEASURING SERVICE QUALITY

Quality or measuring quality has never been considered to be a management function, but rather a technical one, because quality is never looked at in financial terms in the way everything else is. With the pressure on quality erupting worldwide and the difficulty in getting senior management to become more quality conscious, it

becomes apparent that a new measurement is needed for quality. The best measurement for this subject is the same as for any other, money. (Crosby, 1984:85).

The cost of quality is divided into two areas, namely the price of nonconformance and the price of conformance. Prices of nonconformance are all the expenses involved in offering poor quality, this represents a large amount of money. The price of conformance is what is necessary to spend to improve our performance.

Collecting the cost of quality is not a difficult task, but it very rarely gets done in a company. Crosby (1984:86) states that "Quality is free". However, the rule is: take everything that would not have to be done if everything were done right the first time and count that as the price of nonconformance.

No customer service quality programme will be successful without a certain amount of control. Whatever the form that it might take, the performance level must be measured against a standard that has been set in order to determine whether the objectives have been reached. The service provider must ascertain what needs to be measured and then determine how this will be done. Blem (1995:91) states that the "what" is always squarely related to the mission, goals and objectives of the business, and one has to deal with the measurement of customer satisfaction, which is completely subjective. He says the most difficult part is developing a system to measure the results and performance of the organisation.

2.9 TOOLS FOR MEASURING CUSTOMER SERVICE PERFORMANCE

Should reliable service be offered it would imply that no gap exists between the expected service and the service that has been delivered, the satisfaction of the customer is not the only yardstick. You have to measure your service that has been delivered and if you do not continuously measure your customer service you cannot know how well you are performing the service (Freemantle, 1992:19). He believes that all the key customer contact points should be monitored. In a restaurant these could include the following:

- on entering the restaurant,
- meeting the waiter/waitress,
- general service providers; namely chef, musicians or cleaning staff and
- cashiers

Random checks and surveys should be conducted at these crucial customer contact points to monitor performance. Questionnaires and unsolicited letters could also be used to monitor service levels (Freemantle, 1992:122).

According to Horovitz (1990:77) there is a single way to learn about customer satisfaction; ask the customer about his feelings, ask him regularly, track the changes and measure the progress. Horovitz (1990:79) also states that letters of complaint is also a tool for measuring customer service and these letters provide valuable detail

as to the nature of the complaint. Sales related measures can also be used to measure customer and employee satisfaction, however this may be misleading because sales could be increasing because of increases in demand. These are the qualitative measurement techniques.

Edvardsson, et al, (1994:179) mentions the following quantitative techniques for measuring service quality, namely:

- Total Quality Index,
- Linjeflyg's Service Encounter,
- Benchmarking and
- Servqual

2.9.1 Total Quality Index (TQIX)

Telia (Swedish Telecom) has devised a quality measurement system namely Total Quality Index. TQIX is based on six factors which are linked with three interest groups. Two factors, return on capital and income concern the economy and are linked to the owners. Two factors, customer service and network performance, concern service and are linked to the customers and two factors, leadership and involvement, concern job satisfaction and are linked to the staff. Each factor is divided into a number of performance indicators, thirty-six in all. In turn these are weighted from one to twelve. Using a special formula the weight of each area (economy, service and job satisfaction) is its total number of awardable quality points, that is the sum of the maximum number of awardable quality points for each of its performance indicators. Each performance

indicator is given a maximum number of points. Together the points for each indicator gives the total value for each area: economy (30 points), service (45 points) and job satisfaction (25 points). The fact that service has the highest number of points indicates that the customers are valued most highly of the three groups. Using a formula, quality points are awarded. The satisfaction of owner, customers and staff are the targets of Telia.

2.9.2 Linjeflyg's Service Barometer

Linjeflyg used to be a Swedish airline company. This "service barometer" consists of regular measurements of customers' quality assessments of Linjeflyg as a whole and the service at various airports. On a scale of one to five using a questionnaire which is handed to passengers, twelve service areas are assessed. These service areas vary from the ticket office to the service-mindedness of the cabin crew. The customer barometer shows what airport is best, and the results are distributed to staff and improvements are then implemented. Staff are then given quick feedback on a questionnaire which is distributed.

2.9.3 Benchmarking

Benchmarking is to measure oneself against other companies, not necessarily competitors. Zairi's view (in Edvardsson, et al, 1994:204) is that there is a dual challenge facing senior managers.

- to investigate benchmarking so that competitive targets can be achieved and

- to ensure that the practice of benchmarking is spread throughout all the activities and business operations.

2.9.4 The Servqual model

Servqual as a tool for measuring service quality will be discussed in Chapter 3.

2.10 SUMMARY

Customer satisfaction is subjective and is extremely difficult to measure. Many service providers seemingly assume that customer service is being friendly and smiling at the customer. Many companies state in advertising campaigns that their service is the best, while very few actual changes have been made in their customer service strategy, resulting in false expectations for the customer, therefore these claims do more damage to the company's image because customers will measure their performance according to the claims that have been made.

There are certain focal areas that need to be scrutinized when evaluating your service quality and these are the areas where the customer has contact with the employees. Irrespective of what management tries to instill into employees, if the staff is not committed to the improvement of service quality, the service quality process is a futile exercise.

There are various quantitative and qualitative mechanisms for measuring service quality. Irrespective of the method that is

adopted, the main objective would be to analyse the data that has been collected, then compare the results to the standards that have been set and take the corrective steps. This monitoring of service quality needs to be performed on a continuous basis in order to be effective.

Service providers must always bear in mind that one of the most effective means of advertising is the satisfied customer and this should be the first objective of any service organisation. Only then should they look at further exceeding the customers' expectations.

CHAPTER 3

THE SERVQUAL MODEL

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CHAPTER 3

THE SERVQUAL MODEL

3.1 INTRODUCTION

There are many service quality instruments that have been developed by various theorists to measure service quality, many of these instruments are mentioned in the studies that have been conducted in the service quality field. Many of these service quality instruments have been mentioned earlier in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 of the study. There are many other service quality models that have not been described in this research project. The service quality model of Gronroos (in Pitt, 1991:24) theorizes that the perceived service is the result of a consumer's view of a number of service dimensions, some of which are technical and some of which are functional in nature. When this perceived service is compared with the expected service, the customer's perception of service quality is formed. However, there seems to be one model that is generally common to most of the research that has been done in the service quality field, namely the Servqual model by Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (1990:24).

The Servqual model is possibly the most suitable instrument for the measurement of service quality because, it is extremely simple to understand. The main reason why it has been selected for use in this study is because it has been designed in such a way that it is an instrument suitable for measuring service quality in a variety of

industries. The dependability and accuracy of the model are also among the reasons why it has been selected as a tool for measuring service quality in sit-down restaurants. As mentioned earlier it has taken commendable effort from Zeithaml, et al to finalise the Servqual model, this together with their initial exploratory research has resulted in the study revolving around this model which would possibly deliver the most accurate and reliable information. Parasuraman, et al (in Richards 1990:10) states that:

"the instrument has been designed to be applicable across a broad spectrum of services. As such, it provides a basic skeleton through its expectations/perceptions format encompassing statements for each of the five service quality dimensions. The skeleton, when necessary, can be adapted or supplemented to fit characteristics or specific research needs of a particular organisation".

The adaptability of the model has therefore strongly contributed to the reason why this particular model of service quality has been chosen for the study.

3.2 CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND OF THE SERVQUAL MODEL

The concepts of perceptions and expectations have always been linked to the concept of perceived service quality. The link is next described as "The degree and direction of discrepancy between consumers' perceptions and expectation" according to Parasuraman, et al, (in Teas, 1993:18). Perceptions (P) are defined as consumer's beliefs concerning the service received. Expectations (E) are

desires or wants of consumers, that is what they feel a service provider should offer rather than would offer.

3.2.1 The P-E Perceived Quality Model

Based on the empirical studies of numerous theorists in the field of quality, it has been suggested that perceived service quality can be represented with the following P-E measurement model:

$$SQ_i = \sum_{j=1}^K W_j (P_{ij} - E_{ij})$$

where:

SQ_i = SERVQUAL overall perceived quality of stimulus i

K = The number of attributes.

W_j = A weighting factor if attributes have differentiated weights¹

P_{ij} = Performance perception of stimulus i with respect to attribute j

E_{ij} = Service quality expectation for attribute j that is the relevant norm for stimulus i (Teas, 1993:19).

This equation suggests that perceived service quality increases as the differences between P_{ij} and E_{ij} increase across attributes. It is important to note that Parasuraman, et al, (in Teas, 1993:19) states that this P-E service gap concept is different from the disconfirmed expectations concept in traditional consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction models. Firstly, the P-E gap concept represents a comparison with a norm or standard; it does not represent a difference between predicted and received service.

Exceeding the norm or standard means high quality is received and falling short of the norm means low quality is received. Secondly, the P-E service quality concept as expressed in the equation is not a predictive model. It is a measurement specification in which perceived quality is equivalent to perceptions-minus-expectations.

The traditional method of operationalising the P-E gap concept is to obtain perception and expectation scores for each attribute and calculate service quality (SQ) by using this equation with the attribute weights implicitly assumed to be equal ($W = 1$). Using an example that could apply to the restaurant industry, the perceptions (P) and expectations (E) measures for the appeal of the physical facilities of a bank are obtained by agree/disagree (strongly agree = 7, strongly disagree = 1) ratings of the following statements.

1. Expectations (E) - "Their physical facilities should be visually appealing."
2. Perceptions (P) - "XYZ's physical facilities are visually appealing."

Parasuraman, et al (in Teas, 1993:19) states that "The difference between the ratings of statements like these is a measure of perceived service quality. The higher (more positive) the perception-minus-expectation score, the higher is the level of perceived service quality."

The P-E measurement framework suggests the highest service quality score for an attribute occurs when the expectations score is +1 and

the perception score is +7, giving a service quality score of +6, (7-1). The lowest service quality score is one in which the expectations score is +7 and the perception score is +1, giving a service quality score of -6, (1-7). If this measurement framework is valid, it should reflect constantly increasing levels of quality as scores move from -6 to +6. However, on the basis of Parasuramans, et al's, (in Teas, 1993:19) definition of service expectations as ideal standards, it has been proven that alternative conceptualisations of the ideal standard may be incompatible with the assumption that increasing P-E scores reflect continually increasing levels of perceived quality.

3.3 THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THE PERCEPTIONS - EXPECTATIONS GAP

A critical analysis which has been conducted by Cronin & Taylor (1992) needs to be viewed in the context of the following two general points: Firstly, that they "Do not conclude that it is unnecessary to measure customer expectations in service quality research". Rather, Cronin and Taylor's results suggest that the performance-minus-expectations is an inappropriate basis for use in the measurement of service quality. The reported results in no way contradict the importance of the unique effect that expectations can have on consumers' perceptions of service quality, according to Boulding (in Cronin & Taylor, 1994:125). Secondly, Cronin & Taylor's results do not actually suggest "that service quality fails to affect purchase intentions". What their results do suggest, is that consumer satisfaction exerts a stronger influence on purchase

intentions than does service quality.

One of the many modifications of the Servqual model is the Servperf model that has been developed by Cronin & Taylor (1992). The Servperf model has also been used to measure service quality in various industries, namely; banking, pest control and fast food (Cronin & Taylor, 1994:125).

There will be numerous comparisons of these two service quality models, in order to ascertain the relative efficiency of the perceptions as a basis of the Servqual model. Parasuraman, et al (in Cronin & Taylor, 1994:125) states that their focus groups used in the formulation of the Servqual model, captured not only the attributes of service quality, but also the underlying psychological process by which consumers form service quality judgments. On the basis of their findings Parasuraman, et al, (1985:1988) conclude that service quality judgments comprise of five underlying attributes that consumers evaluate on the basis of the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm. This phenomenon has been mentioned earlier, the five attributes that are being referred to are the five dimensions of service quality, namely:

- tangibles,
- reliability,
- responsiveness,
- assurance and
- empathy.

One of the co-authors of the Servqual model, Zeithaml (1993:24) (who

conducted further research) has found perhaps the most telling evidence to date is that: "Our results are incompatible with both the one - dimensional view of expectations and the gap formation of service quality. Instead, we have found that service quality is directly influenced only by perceptions of performance".

In Cronin and Taylor (1994:126) it has been found that studies conducted by Peter, Churchill & Brown (1992) also present compelling arguments. This is supported by Babakus and Boller (1992) and Babakus and Mangold (1992) in support of performance-based measures of service quality over gap measures as used by Parasuraman, et al, (1991).

Oliver (1977, 1980a, 1981) (in Cronin & Taylor, 1994:126) states that consumers make judgments on the basis of a comparison of product performance to expectations in the determination of consumer satisfaction. Though, conceptually, consumers can make arithmetic or calculated comparisons between expectations and performance (as in the petrol of a car's consumption per kilometre), they may not, because of the relevant performance dimensions that cannot be quantified, for example, aesthetics and pleasure. Thus, the perceived summary disconfirmation judgment is sufficient as a causal agent for satisfaction. In situations in which expectation and performance data are available, at least to the researcher, it is possible to infer the consumer's disconfirmation through arithmetic means. Researchers have tested variations of this inferential measure in models including a summary measure and have shown that the summary measure mediates the effect of the inferential measure on satisfaction. This would appear to be a reasonable finding

because consumer perceptions, not calculations, govern behaviour.

Thus, Parasuraman, et al's (1994:126) generalization of the satisfaction paradigm to service quality evaluations based on the qualitative evidence, apparent in their focus group interpretations, could reflect the general ambiguity inherent in the service quality literature regarding the distinction between service quality and consumer satisfaction, rather than clear support for the efficacy of the Servqual model. Similar ambiguity could be reflected in consumers' and managers' understanding of the difference between service quality and consumer satisfaction. This ambiguity could possibly also be reflected in the focus groups conducted by Parasuraman, et al (1985).

Given the arguments presented here, along with the growing body of literature criticizing the five-dimension conceptualisation, the assumption that "little if any theoretical or empirical evidence supports the relevance of the expectations-performance gap as the basis for measuring service quality appears creditable" (Cronin & Taylor, 1994:126).

Carman (in Richards, 1990:12) also found that it was necessary to add, alter or delete items from the original Servqual instrument in terms of the dimensionality. The dimensions that are regarded as being important are broken into sub-dimensions. He has also noted that a customer's perception of two entirely different services, as a result of wording, may not be captured in a given set of questions, that is, the term security in a financial setting, as opposed to in a service station, would be manifested differently. This type

of discrepancies which are being mentioned are questionable as in most empirical investigations it would be seldom that these types of preconceived perceptions could be entirely eliminated from the results.

Further criticisms by Carman (in Richards, 1990:13) include the questioning of respondents using the perceptions and expectations battery simultaneously. This, he believes, does not allow the respondents to formulate an expectation of the service that is to be rendered. The customer has already been exposed to the service provider's level of service quality and this would preempt an expectation being formulated based on the service level that was initially delivered.

However, this would create implications to the research process significantly should this method be adopted, because the Servqual model and its application would be disturbed, which could result in inaccurate results been processed and recorded. The other difficulty that has been identified is that people frequent service related organisations very often and all consumers therefore have a certain expectation level based on their earlier experience with similar organisations, so this problem will never be resolved, for example, frequenting a service station. A possible solution to minimising the inconvenience suffered by the respondent for having to complete two batteries of questions, namely, the expectations and perceptions dimensions could be resolved should these two dimensions be combined. However, extreme care should be taken to ensure that both the expectations and perceptions dimensions are encapsulated in the question that has been formulated to combine these two aspects.

Finally, it has also been suggested that the questions in the questionnaire should be prioritised in order of importance for a given dimension, but these self-report scales are not always effective. For example, a customer might indicate that a first-aid kit is extremely important to them, but when asked whether they have one at home, very few responded positively. Carman (in Richards, 1990:13).

3.4 VALIDITY OF SERVQUAL

The opinions expressed earlier on the validity of the Servqual model provide us with critical information of the model. This provides us with insight into a few possible shortcomings of the Servqual model. However, many of the opinions expressed previously have not been scientifically validated and can therefore not be proven. There are, however, numerous researchers who have used the Servqual model to measure service quality in various industries, which implies that the model can present fairly accurate results when measuring service quality.

The authors and developers of the Servqual model have a number of issues which they have raised in response to the concerns raised by other researchers, specifically those stated in Cronin and Taylor (1992).

A few of the concerns that were raised will now be addressed, namely:

- Conceptual issues,
- Practical issues and

- The relationship between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction.

3.4.1 Conceptual issues

Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry (1994:111) clearly indicate that their research has provided strong support for defining service quality as the discrepancy between customers' expectations and perceptions. This view has also been supported by numerous other researchers in Parasuraman, et al (1994:112), namely, Gronroos (1982); Lehtinen & Lehtinen (1982); Saser, Olsen and Wyckoff (1978) and Bolton and Drew (1991 a, b). Cronin & Taylor (1994:126) mention Bolton and Drew as support for stating that: "The marketing literature appears to offer considerable support for the superiority of simple performance - based measures of service quality". This claim seems questionable.

Parasuraman, et al (1994:112) also postulate that the Servqual model is designed to merely measure perceived service quality, which is an attitude level at a given point in time, regardless of the process by which it was formed. Servqual is a tool to obtain a reading of the attitude level, not a statement about how the level was developed.

3.4.2 Practical issues

Cronin & Taylor (in Parasuraman, et al, 1994:115) have stated that: "Practitioners often measure the determinants of overall satisfaction/perceived quality by having customers simply assess the performance of the company's business processes". However, it has

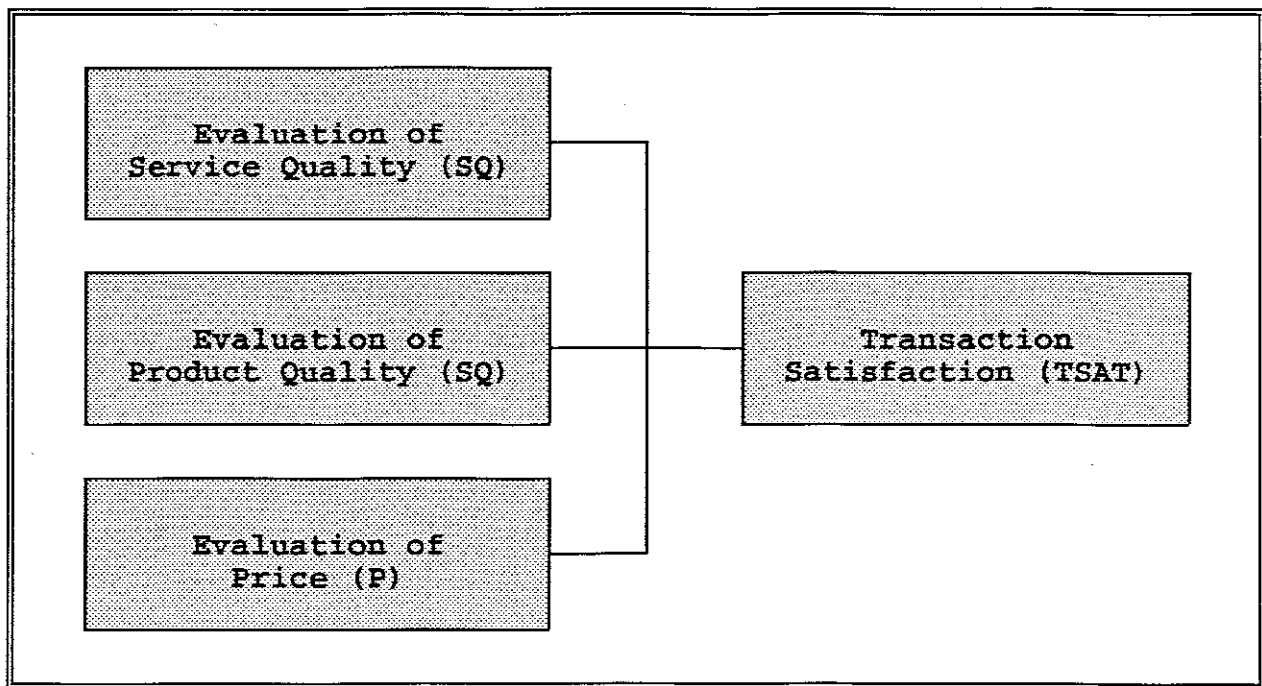
been found that when service quality is measured using customer expectations the results have been more meaningful than when only customer perceptions are taken into consideration. Therefore, the Servqual model seems to be the most effective tool for measuring service quality. The objective for measuring service quality would be to assess the shortfalls in service quality and Servqual has seemingly greater diagnostic value than many other service quality models.

3.4.3 The Relationship between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction

There is insufficient evidence to support claims that there is a direct relationship between the two constructs, namely, service quality and customer satisfaction. There has been views expressed by many service quality researchers that customer satisfaction leads to service quality. However this contradicts the findings of customer satisfaction researchers. Teas (in Parasuraman, et al, 1994:121) suggests that a possible integrative framework that reflects and reconciles these differing perspectives is sorely needed to divert our attention from merely debating the causal relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction to indicate how these two constructs interrelate: "One way to integrate these two causal perspectives is to specify two perceived quality concepts- transaction-specific quality and relationship quality - and to specify perceived transaction-specific quality as the transaction-specific performance component of contemporary consumer satisfaction models. This implies that transaction-specific satisfaction is a function of perceived transaction specific performance quality.

Furthermore, ... transaction-specific satisfaction could be argued to be a predictor of perceived long-term relationship quality". Figure 3.1 portrays the proposed transaction-specific conceptual model. This model posits that a customer's overall satisfaction with a transaction is to be a function of his or her assessment of service quality, product quality and price.

FIGURE 3.1 - COMPONENTS OF TRANSACTION-SPECIFIC EVALUATIONS



Source: Parasuraman, et al (1994:121)

Customer satisfaction can only occur if both the tangible and intangible offerings of the service provider meets with perceived quality expectations of the consumer. It would be consistent with a restaurant's image should the service quality be of a very high standard, namely, courteous staff, efficient service and a pleasant environment, while the meal is very expensive and the seating arrangements uncomfortable. This highlights the emphasis that

should be placed on consistent "balanced service offerings" of both intangible and tangible aspects by service providers, as both these dimensions determine service quality. This epitomises the five dimensions which Zeithaml, et al (1990:23) have identified which customer's use to measure the perceived service quality, as these dimensions include both a tangible and an intangible dimension.

These facts and opinions presented here thus far regarding the validity of various aspects of the Servqual model could be viewed as being very subjective. However, the study would also like to consider the validity and applicability of the Servqual model as viewed by various researchers who have used this instrument to measure service quality under South African conditions in order to further ascertain its' validity.

3.5 THE SERVQUAL MODEL AND ITS' APPLICATIONS

The Servqual model is a multiple-item scale with good reliability and validity, which is used to measure the service perceptions and expectations of customers. The basic framework of the instrument consists of an expectations-perceptions format encompassing statements for each of the five service-quality dimensions (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy). As stated earlier, the framework can be adopted or supplemented to fit the characteristics or specific research needs of a study. Addendum 3A depicts the original Servqual model, which contains an expectations section consisting of twenty-two statements and a perceptions section consisting of a matching set of company specific statements. There is also a section to ascertain a customers' assessment of the

relative importance of the five dimensions. This section is placed between the expectations and perceptions sections (Zeithaml, et al, 1990:175).

3.5.1 Computing

The Servqual statements (in both the expectations and perceptions sections) are grouped into the five dimensions as follows:

DIMENSION	STATEMENTS PERTAINING TO THE DIMENSION
Tangibles	Statements 1 - 4
Reliability	Statements 5 - 9
Responsiveness	Statements 10 - 13
Assurance	Statements 14 - 17
Empathy	Statements 18 - 22

Using Servqual to assess the quality of service involves computing the difference between the ratings customers assign to the paired expectation/perception statements. Specifically, a gap 5 or Servqual score for each statement pair, for each customer is computed as follows:

$$\text{Servqual score} = \text{Perception Score} - \text{Expectation Score}$$

A company's quality of service along each of the five dimensions can then be assessed across all customers by averaging their Servqual scores on statements making up the dimension.

For example, if N customers respond to a Servqual survey, the average Servqual score along each dimension is obtained through the following two steps:

- 1) For each customer, add the Servqual scores on the statements pertaining to the dimension and divide the sum by the number of statements making up the dimension.

- 2) Add the quantity obtained in step 1 across all N customers and divide the total by N.

The Servqual scores for the five dimensions obtained in the preceding fashion can themselves be averaged, that is, summed and divided by five, to obtain an overall measure of service quality (Zeithaml, et al, 1990:176).

3.5.2 Applications of Servqual

The second aspect which the Servqual model can identify in addition to the overall quality of service are the key dimensions and the facets within those dimensions on which a company should focus its quality-improvement efforts.

The Servqual model and the data generated by it can also be used in the following ways:

- Comparing customers' expectations and perceptions over time through repeated administration of Servqual to determine how the gap between expectations and perceptions are changing.

- Comparing your own Servqual scores against competitors' scores by including a set of perception statements for

competing companies.

- Examining customer segments with differing quality perceptions and based on their individual Servqual scores, namely, high, medium and low, categorising a company's customers into several perceived - quality segments.

- Assessing quality perceptions of internal customers through adapting Servqual to ascertain the quality of service within various divisions or departments within a company (Zeithaml, et al, 1990:180).

3.6 THE SERVQUAL MODEL USED UNDER SOUTH AFRICAN CONDITIONS

The Servqual model has been used to measure service quality on many occasions under South African conditions. The following will serve as examples:

- The short term insurance industry,
- Airline service,
- Retail pharmacy and
- Motor repair service industry

3.6.1 The short term insurance industry

The study to measure service quality in the short term insurance industry was conducted by Jooste, et al (1993:236). The focus of

their study was the perception of service quality by the broker as a middleman in the distribution channel.

The Servqual model was also used by Jooste, et al (1993) to measure:

- the level of service delivery within the distribution channel
- the level of service quality within a total industry rather than within individual companies.

As the service quality level of an entire industry was assessed the sampling objects differed substantially from the units used under normal research conditions. An empirical investigation was conducted and results were concluded based on a sixty-six percent response rate. The findings of this research was as follows:

- Servqual is certainly suited for the measurement of the level of service quality within a total industry as well as the level of service delivery within a distribution channel
- The "reliability" dimension of the model is the most problematic. The main reasons for this is as a direct result of problems specific to the short-term insurance industry. Some of these problems were:
 - poor record keeping and policy information,
 - inaccurate billing,
 - slow service and

- poor efficiency with regard to management information.

- The study also indicated a poor rating on the "responsiveness" dimension. The main complaints in this regard was the poor communication between brokers and insurance companies (Jooste, et al 1993:237).

3.6.2 Airline service

The measurement of service quality in the airline service and in pharmacies has been conducted by Pitt (1991:68). The Servqual model underwent extensive modifications when it was used to measure service quality in the airline industry, however, minimal changes were necessary when the model was used to measure the service quality in pharmacies.

What was unique in the airline industry results was that respondents' experienced the greatest problems with the service quality dimensions of tangibles and reliability. This is contrary to the usual patterns which develop in studies such as this. In many studies, the tangibles gap is the least serious and in many cases is positive (Parasuraman, et al (in Pitt 1991:70)). It may also occur in certain circumstances that additional items need to be added to the Servqual model if aspects of service quality which are truly unique to a particular industry are to be captured. Despite displaying differences in terms of factor analysis the Servqual model has been shown to be very reliable in the study of service quality in the airline industry.

3.6.3 Retail pharmacies

The Servqual model performed well with regard to reliability in the measurement of perceptions of service quality in the case of respondents to the retail pharmacies service quality study (Pitt 1991:92). However, even though it performed well with regard to reliability and some aspects of validity, the instrument did not perform as expected in terms of other correlations and factor analysis.

3.6.4 Motor repair service industry

This study was conducted by Boshoff (1990:32) and the Servqual model was used to measure service quality in three selected industries, the other two being the banking industry and short term insurance industry. A five-point Likert-type scale for twenty-two items was used. The difference between the score for expectations and for evaluations constituted a Servqual score for an individual item ($\text{Servqual} = P - E$). Therefore a Servqual score of zero indicated satisfaction of consumer expectations, while a positive score indicates that the consumer's expectations were exceeded. In the analysis that was conducted of the empirical investigation it was found that both assurance/reliability and tangibles exert a significant influence on service quality, with the former being more important to the consumer (Boshoff, 1990:332). Once again the Servqual model as a tool for measuring service quality in various industries under South African conditions was appropriate and applicable.

3.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE SERVQUAL MODEL

Potential users of the Servqual model should be cautious. It has been found that the reliability of the tangibles construct is low. The problem also encountered while using the Servqual model to measure the service quality of information system's effectiveness is that the model does not clearly discriminate among the dimensions of service quality. Researchers who use the Servqual model to discriminate the impact of service changes should be aware of using it to distinguish among the closely aligned concepts of responsiveness, assurance and empathy. These concepts are not semantically distant and there appear to be situations where users perceive them very similarly (Pitt, Watson & Kavan, 1995:181).

3.8 SUMMARY

The debate as to which tool should be used for measuring service quality continues, with many contrasting opinions as to which tool would deliver the most accurate results. The resolution of which tool most accurately measures service quality appears to have no definitive or immediate answer. The Servqual model is one of the tools which has in its favour the fact that it is applicable and has been applied across a broad spectrum of industries.

The model has been criticised and various possible shortcomings have been identified. The authors should possibly take cognisance of the criticisms of the model and view these criticisms in a positive manner with a view to, where possible, building these adjustments

into the model so as to further improve its' effectiveness.

The perceptions-expectations type questionnaire can be modified to measure service quality in sit-down restaurants. This type of study has been conducted by using "Dineserv" which was the Servqual model in a modified form. This model was used with great success in the past (Stevens, Knutson & Putton, 1995:57). As a similar study has been conducted, there is little doubt that the Servqual model will be suitable for the purposes of the study.

CHAPTER 4

THE GAPS OF THE SERVQUAL MODEL

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CHAPTER 4

THE GAPS OF THE SERVQUAL MODEL

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Many service-oriented organisations have realised the importance of increasing the level of service quality they provide to their consumers. Though these organisations have improved their quality of service by doing some form of research to determine their service quality shortfalls their offering of higher service quality is only short-lived if there is no continuous monitoring of the service being provided, as inconsistencies and discrepancies in the service offering are bound to occur. Without the correct control mechanisms in place this monitoring could be a difficult task and the service quality levels could start to falter. This chapter would be focussing on the internal problems that companies experience, which ultimately contributes to the consumers' perception of a company being either positive or negative. Therefore, there seems to be a relationship between the internal service quality shortfalls or problems within an organisation and the consumers' perception of the organisation. As stated in chapter one, these service quality shortfalls have been cast into four key discrepancies or gaps pertaining to executives' perceptions of service quality and the tasks associated with service delivery to customers. Figure 1.3 depicts the conceptual model of service quality. This figure clearly illustrates how Gaps 1 through 4 are the shortfalls within the service provider's organisation and Gap 5 denotes the service

quality shortfall as perceived by the customer. These gaps or discrepancies could be the major hurdles in attempting to deliver a service which consumers would perceive as being of a high quality.

One of the most critical steps in delivering quality service is to know what customers expect. This knowledge is vital in order to ensure that the service provided to the customer is perceived as being excellent. Even by being slightly wrong about what customers want, could quite easily result in losing a customer to a competitor, should the competitor be more accurate in predicting what the customers' needs are. Inaccurate predictions of consumer needs could also be very costly to an organisation. These could ultimately result in failure to survive in fiercely competitive markets.

4.2 GAP 1 - NOT KNOWING WHAT CUSTOMERS EXPECT

Numerous researchers in the service quality field agree that expectations are very important in a customers' evaluation of service. This also seems to occur in customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction literature. Expectations also serve as a reference point in customers' assessment of service performance. However, the debate continues about how best to incorporate expectations into service quality measurement (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1994:201).

4.2.1 Expectations as comparison standards

Researchers have generally viewed expectations as normative standards, that is, customers' beliefs about what a service provider

should offer. The dominant view among researchers is that expectations are predictive standards, namely, what customers feel a service provider will offer. It has also been found that in order to better understand and synthesize the various comparison standards, Zeithaml, et al, (in Parasuraman, et al, 1994:202) combined insights from past conceptualisations with findings from a multi-sector study to develop an integrative model of customers' service expectations. This model posits service expectations as existing at two different levels which customers use as comparison standards in assessing service quality, namely:

Desired Service: The level of service representing a blend of what customers believe "can be" and "should be" provided.

Adequate Service: The minimum level of service customers are willing to accept.

Separating these two levels of service quality is a zone of *tolerance* that represents the range of service performance a customer would consider satisfactory.

Unlike in the product industry where performance is measured in various units, namely, kilograms, joules, centimentres or watts, the service industry has not yet developed a standardisation for the measurement of service standards. By creating operating standards is also of little or no interest to the customer. Restaurants may have standards of setting a table or waiting on tables, but these standards are of an operating nature. Therefore service quality standards need to be set to verify performance and to determine

whether a promise is kept.

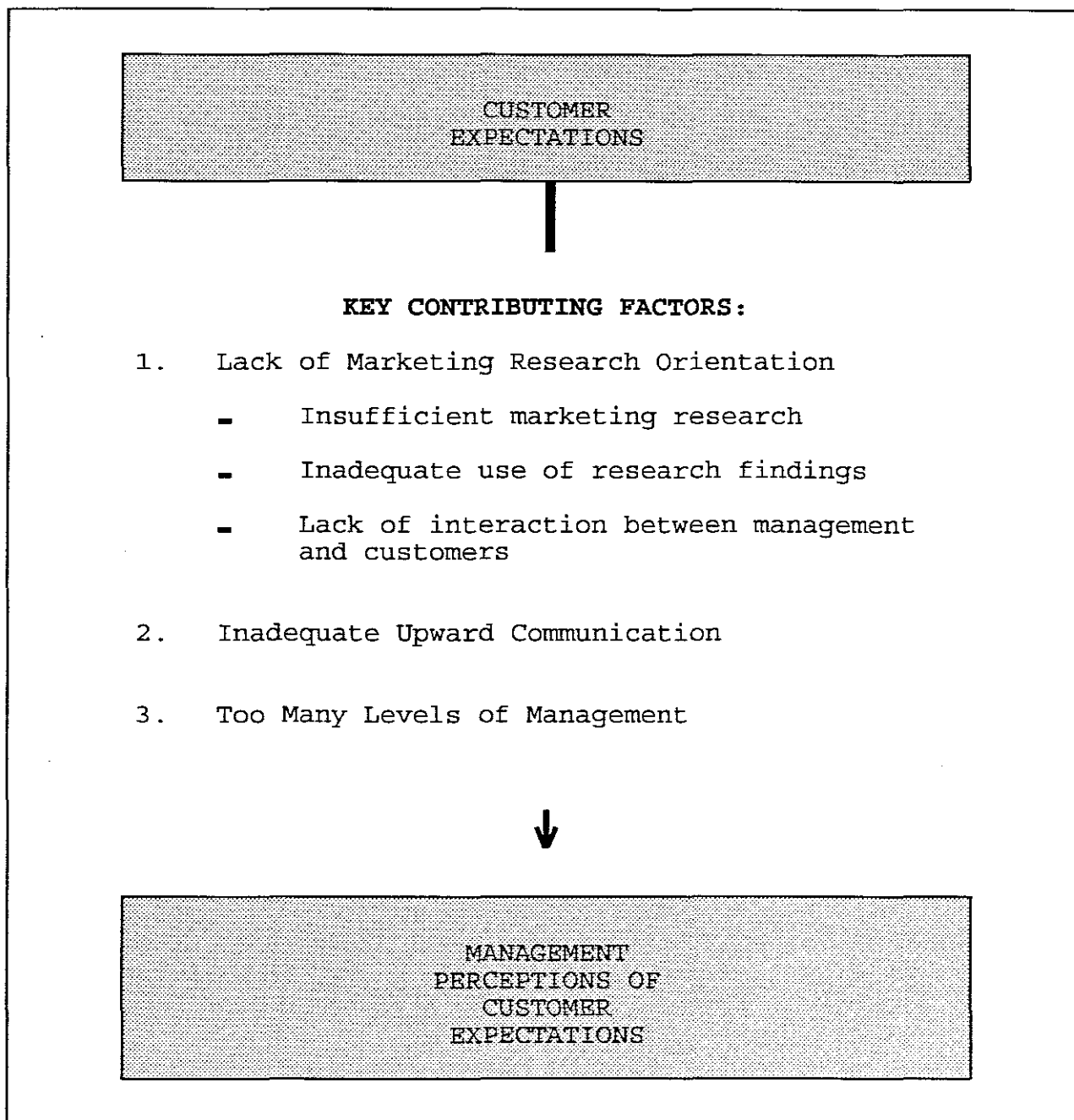
Customers' expectations therefore serves as a basis on which standards can be set. In order to become a true performance indicator and not simply an operational rule, a standard must be defined in terms of results for the customer, that is, the customer expects, the customer wants, the customer shall have (Horovitz, 1990:50). The tasks which must be performed to satisfy the customer will have to be identified in terms of what tasks certain personnel will be responsible for performing. These tasks need to be specified, only then can the manager develop methods for accomplishing these tasks.

4.2.2 Key reasons for gap 1

Zeithaml, et al (1990:51) has identified three conceptual factors that contribute to Gap 1. These factors are depicted in Figure 4.1 and they are:

- lack of marketing research orientation, which is evidenced by insufficient marketing research, inadequate use of research findings and also the lack of interaction between management and customers,
- inadequate upward communication from contact personnel to management and
- excessive levels of management separating contact personnel from top managers.

FIGURE 4.1 - KEY FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO GAP 1



Source: Zeithaml, et al, (1990:52)

A few examples that would illustrate discrepancies between executive perceptions and consumer expectations are:

- Privacy or confidentiality during transactions emerged as a

pivotal quality attribute amongst clients in a bank. This was rarely mentioned when executives of the bank were interviewed.

- The physical and security features of credit cards, for example, the chances that unauthorised people could use the cards generated concern once again amongst clients of a bank. This was not critical when the management of the bank was interviewed.

- Customers viewing large repair and maintenance firms in a negative manner in terms of quality. However, they viewed, smaller firms as better service quality providers. A contrasting view was expressed by executives who indicated a firm's size would signal strength in a quality context (Parasuraman, et al, 1985:41).

4.2.3 Gap 1 Problem: Insufficient marketing research

It seems as if executive management of service providers tend to misdirect their focus of the service they provide to consumers, while not enough research is conducted to monitor the constantly changing needs and expectations of consumers. As most service providers are focussing on cutting down on costs in many areas such as staffing, auxillary services, promotional and advertising expenditures, it would be extremely short-sighted to maintain the existing modus operandi, because the target markets' needs and expectations are constantly changing. This monitoring of consumers' expectations need not incur huge capital expenditures as there are simple cost-effective methods of conducting research, especially

within restaurants where data can be collected by simply posing simple questions to the customer, an example of a typical question would be, enquiring from the customer whether the portion of the meal that was served was sufficient and if it was adequately prepared.

Marketing research is therefore a key vehicle for understanding customers' expectations and perceptions of service, a firm that does not collect this information is more than likely to have a large Gap 1. A firm that conducts marketing research, but not on the topic of customers' expectations may also have a large Gap 1. To close this gap, marketing research must focus on service quality issues such as; which features are most important to customers, which levels of these features customers expect, also what customers think the company can and should do when problems occur in service delivery.

4.2.4 Closing gap 1: Researching customers' expectations

As stated, finding out what customers expect is essential in providing service quality. Even when a service firm is small and has limited resources to conduct research, there are avenues to explore to determine what customers expect. Zeithaml, et al, (1990:55) presents selected methods of researching customers' expectations beginning with the simplest (and least expensive) and ending with the most comprehensive (and often most costly) marketing research strategies. Figure 4.2 depicts selected methods for understanding customers' expectations.

FIGURE 4.2 - SELECTED METHODS FOR UNDERSTANDING CUSTOMERS' EXPECTATIONS

	INVESTMENT OF MONEY	INVESTMENT OF TIME	PRIMARY USES
Strategic use of complaints	Low	Low	Identifying problems in the service process
Customers' desires in similar industries	Low	Low	Developing an initial framework for customers' expectations in focal industry
Research on intermediate customers	Moderate	Moderate	Efficient way to gain in-depth information on end customers
Key client studies	Moderate	Moderate	In-depth information on most important customers
Customer panels	Moderate to high	Moderate to high	Continuous source of information on changing customers' expectations
Transaction-based studies	Moderate	Moderate	Provides feedback on service quality performance of each component of service quality
Comprehensive customers' expectations studies	High	High	Establishes measures that are customer-based; provides foundation for tracking studies which provide a dynamic view of customers' expectations and perceptions

Source: Zeithaml, et al (1990:55)

Figure 4.2 depicts other possible alternative forms of research which could be conducted, clearly indicating the type of data that could be collected using these methods.

4.2.5 Gap 1 Problem: Inadequate use of research findings

The inability of managers to process the data that they have collected using various research techniques is a problem which further results in the widening of Gap 1. The raw data that has been collected is not processed, or should it be processed the interpretation of the data into meaningful and valuable information is not done correctly. Pitt (1990:17) states that, "All too often research seems to be used by South African managers as a drunk uses a lamp pole - for support. Rather, we should use the lamp pole as the sober person does - for illumination". The use of suggestion boxes that are emptied on a daily basis and compiling the recommendations and sharing it with staff is a means of reducing the size of gap 1. Gap 1 can also be further reduced by ensuring that managers follow-up on dissatisfied customers by telephoning them to ascertain whether their complaints or problems have been thoroughly resolved.

Management must learn to use marketing research findings to improve their quality of service in order to understand customers' expectations, hereby reducing Gap 1.

4.2.6 Gap 1 Problem: Lack of interaction between management and customers

The organisational structure of many service providers is large, resulting in the lack of involvement or interaction between top management and the customer. This results in managers not always being aware of the customers' needs and wants. Many times this information is passed on to top management through numerous written

reports. These reports have been written by lower and middle management and is therefore often biased and distorted. Should numerous problems and complaints constantly filter through to top management it would reflect poorly on other staff members. Therefore top management needs to increase the contact they have with their customers significantly, to ensure that they get the "real picture" of what is happening during the service encounter.

There are numerous solutions to overcome this lack of interaction between top management and customers. Fortunately, these solutions are very inexpensive and practical and can be implemented with relative ease. This could be achieved by top management simply spending more time familiarising themselves with customers. This could be achieved in a restaurant by ensuring that the manager spends time walking around to the various tables enquiring from the customers whether everything meets their satisfaction. The manager could perform the task of waiting on a few tables to gain first-hand knowledge of complaints and dissatisfactions from customers. These techniques are only a few of the tactics that could be utilized to reducing this lack of interaction between top management and customers.

4.2.7 Gap 1 Problem: Lack of upward communication and excessive levels between contact personnel and management

Pitt (1990:17) states that the lack of upward communication has to do with the way in which top management seeks, stimulates and facilitates the flow of information from employees at lower levels. Where this is absent Gap 1 inevitably occurs.

Another frequent cause of Gap 1 is an excessive number of levels between the top-most and the bottom-most levels in the organisational hierarchy. Too many levels within the organisational hierarchy separate top managers from those who have contact with customers on a daily basis.

The means of reducing the lack of interaction between top management and customer-contact staff, together with the other levels of staff, is to ensure that the task of each individual manager within the organisation encourages and facilitates upward communication. If information from contact personnel is passed directly on to top management, managers will be better informed. When this occurs contact personnel should be appropriately rewarded.

"Multiple levels of management encumber expression and awareness because they erect buffers between those managers who specify service quality standards and the contact personnel who must deliver according to these standards" (Pitt 1990:18).

These numerous levels of management are at times unnecessary and inevitably result in large bureaucracies being formed which do not benefit customers in any way.

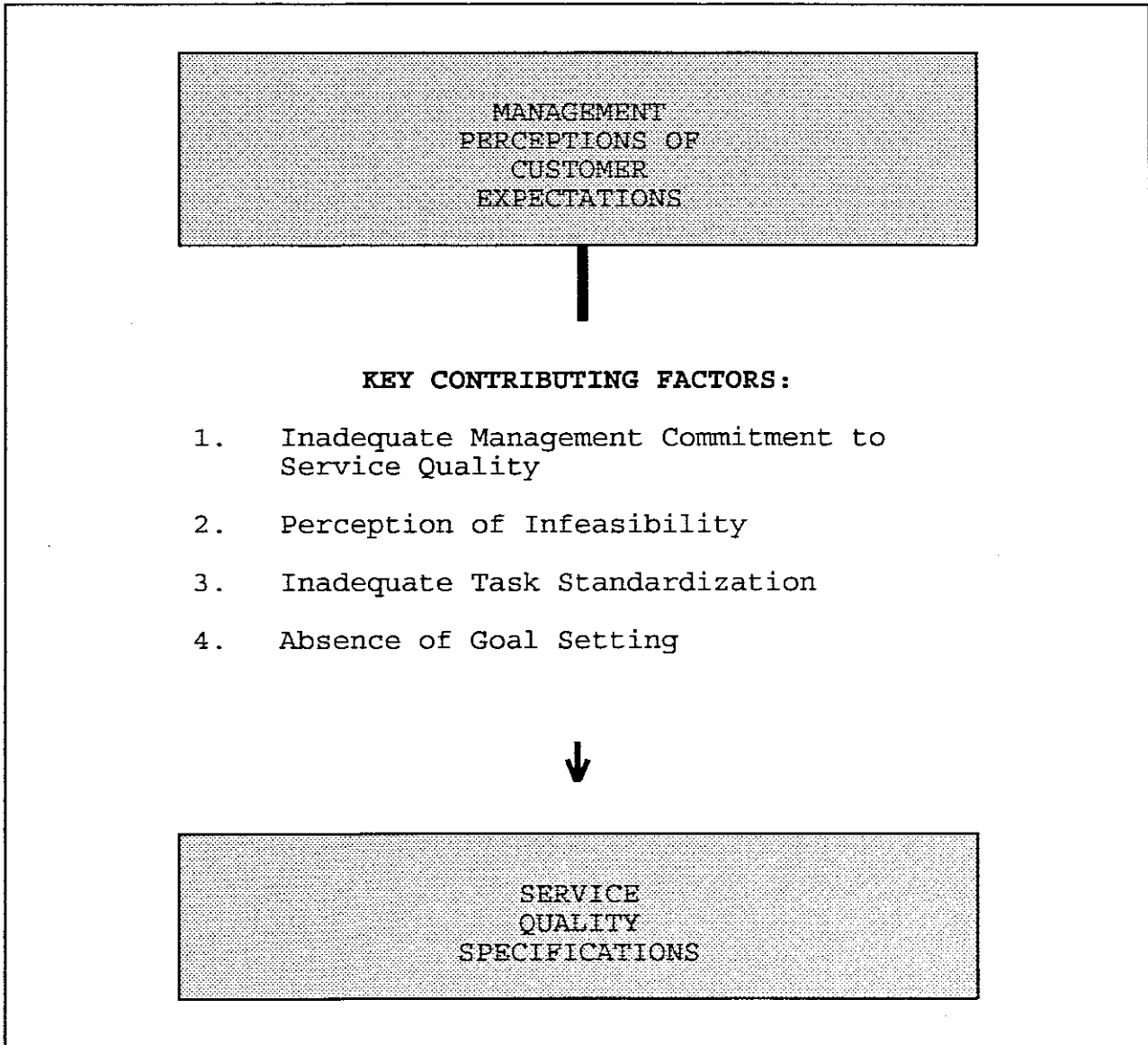
4.3 GAP 2 - SETTING THE WRONG STANDARDS

The understanding of customer expectations is not sufficient to ensure that service quality is offered. Once customer expectations are understood this knowledge should be utilised to set the service quality standards for the company. Gap 2 is the discrepancy between

managers' perceptions of customers' expectations and the actual specifications they establish for service delivery.

The key factors which result in Gap 2 are depicted in Figure 4.3.

FIGURE 4.3 - KEY FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO GAP 2



Source: Zeithaml, et al (1990:72)

These key factors which contribute to Gap 2 are more explicitly explained in Figure 4.4 which conceptualises the major factors which

contribute to the widening of Gap 2.

FIGURE 4.4 - CONCEPTUAL FACTORS PERTAINING TO GAP 2

Factor and Definition	Specific Illustrative Issues
<p>Management Commitment to Service Quality: Extent to which management views service quality as a key strategic goal.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are resources committed to departments to improve service quality? - Do internal programmes exist for improving the quality of service to customers? - Are managers who improve the quality of service to customers more likely to be rewarded than other managers? - Does the company emphasize its sales goals as much as or more than it emphasizes serving customers? - Are upper and middle managers committed to providing quality service to their customers?
<p>Perception of Feasibility: Extent to which managers believe that customer expectations can be met.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does the company have the necessary capabilities to meet customer requirements for service? - Can customer expectations be met without hindering financial performance? - Do existing operations systems enable customer expectations to be met? - Are resources and personnel available to deliver the level of service that customers demand? - Does management change existing policies and procedures to meet the needs of customers?
<p>Task Standardisation : Extent to which hard and soft technology are used to standardise service tasks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is automation used to achieve consistency in serving customers? - Are programs in place to improve operating procedures so that consistent service is provided?
<p>Goal-Setting: Extent to which service quality are based on customer standards and expectations rather than company standards.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is there a formal process for setting quality of service goals for employees? - Does the company have clear goals about what it wants to accomplish? - Does the company measure its performance in meeting its service quality goals? - Are service goals based on customer-oriented standards rather than company-oriented standards?

Source: Zeithaml, et al (1990:73)

Evans (1989:32) has identified constraints which contribute to the inability of service providers to match or exceed customer expectations, namely:

- Wide fluctuations in demand
- Lack of trained personnel and
- The absence of total management commitment.

4.3.1 **Gap 2 Problem: Inadequate management commitment to service quality**

As with many other aspects of implementing an effective service quality programme, to ensure that it is successful, you need the commitment of top management, not just "lip service". Top management need to lead by example by establishing a culture of service quality, if they expect the commitment of other staff members. This commitment to quality needs to be constant and visible in order to motivate staff. Other short-term objectives, such as cost reduction, market share and profitability are easier to assess and they seem to warrant managements' attention and focus, as opposed to service quality. Top management needs to define service quality from the customers' point of view and not from the company's point of view (Pitt, 1990:59). Another major problem is that top management may fully support the implementation of service quality programmes, but because middle and lower management are not as committed to this process, the momentum of the service quality process seems to go astray at this level. Therefore, it is imperative that middle and lower management are aware of the vital role that they play in ensuring the success of a service quality programme. This increased awareness could be accomplished by motivating middle management and lower management by offering them incentives for participating in the service quality programme. Also by educating these employees by placing them on service quality training

programmes to encourage more commitment.

4.3.2 Perception of infeasibility

Generally South African service providers have a perception of infeasibility: "It can't be done". Alternatively, the old cliché, "We don't have the money or the time, or we don't have people who are skilled or committed" to perform the function. The list of excuses are endless (Pitt 1990:60). Some of these constraints that have been mentioned could be true, but many of them fit a mind-set that may or may not be related to the actual constraints within the organisation. Managers need to free themselves of these constraints that they have created for themselves and through creative thinking learn to look beyond these internal barriers. For example, providing customers with a free beverage if there are no tables available for seating. Another extremely important aspect is that feasibility can only be achieved if the organisation is amenable to change, innovative and willing to be different. The mentality then shifts to one of, "Anything the customer wants is feasible, until proven not to be and then only after rigorous testing". One of the final ingredients to perceive feasibility is to invest time, money and effort to fully satisfy the customer (Zeithaml, et al, 1990:77).

4.3.3 Gap 2 Problem: Inadequate standardisation of tasks

Inadequate task standardisation, as a cause of Gap 2, involves the extent to which hard and soft technology are used to standardise service tasks. In the restaurant industry it is essential to be selective as to which tasks are standardised or routinised as this

could result in the service offering being perceived as being impersonal, inadequate or not in the customers' interest. There are certain functions in a restaurant which could be standardised, namely:

- Setting of tables,
- Cleaning utensils and linen,
- Food portions and
- Presenting the bill after the meal.

These tasks that have been standardised must be justified so that it results in the customer benefitting, for example, by the customer receiving fast and efficient service, would this still have been possible without standardising certain tasks.

We must therefore ask the following questions, namely, "Is automation used to achieve consistency in servicing customers?" or "Are programmes in place to improve operating procedures so that consistent service is provided?" These questions will assist us in determining the extent to which hard and soft technology are used to standardise service tasks. Examples of standardised hard technology is an automated-teller-machine while self-service buffets is an example of soft technology (Pitt, 1990:60). As mentioned earlier, good service quality is in providing the customer with the finer detail. It is therefore essential to customize your main service offering to ensure that you are able to differentiate your service offering from competing organisations.

4.3.4 Gap 2 Problem: Absence of goal-setting

Goals should be set by giving careful consideration to the customers' needs and expectations and not on internal company standards only. Companies that set goals for their employees in terms of providing service quality are generally more successful than service companies who do not set goals for their employees. Goals serve as a standard or "destination" to which employees can strive. It is essential that that goals are measurable, realistic and achievable.

4.3.5 Closing Gap 2: Setting service quality goals

The size of Gap 2 could be reduced by setting service quality goals. Zeithaml, et al, (1990:84) has identified the common characteristics of effective service-quality goals, namely:

- Designed to meet customers' expectations,
- Specific. Effective service goals are defined in specific ways that enable providers to understand what they are being asked to deliver.
- Accepted by employees. Employees will only perform to standards consistently if they understand and accept the goals.
- Important job dimensions. Management should set clear priorities for service personnel which clearly indicate

which aspects of the job are most critical.

- Measurement and review with appropriate feedback. To be effective, goals must be measured and reviewed regularly.

Gap 2 will not be reduced overnight, however, if attention is given to these causes, and these recommendations, management will be a long way towards specifying the correct service quality standards (Pitt, 1990:60).

4.4 GAP 3: THE SERVICE PERFORMANCE GAP

Should the top management of service organisations manage to reduce both the size of Gap 1 and Gap 2 it does not imply that the service quality that is provided, is perceived by the customer as being of a high level. As is often the case, problems occurs with the actual delivery of the service by employees. This could be as a direct result of an unwillingness or inability of staff to deliver the service quality that is expected of them. The difference between service specifications and delivered service is the service performance gap, which is common in many service organisations.

As most service organisations are people-driven, there will always be an element of variability in the service offering. Zeithaml, et al (1990:89) states that, "A willingness to perform may be described as discretionary effort, which is the difference between the maximum amount of effort and care that an individual could bring to his or her job and the minimum amount of effort required to avoid being fired or penalised". This describes an employee's unwillingness or

inability to perform at the required level resulting in poor quality service being offered.

4.4.1 Gap 3 Problem: Employee role ambiguity

Management is largely responsible for the confusion created with staff as to the role staff are expected to play in organisations. Staff are not aware of what is required of them in performing their daily functions. This could result in wasted efforts being directed at tasks which should have been performed by another staff member. Both poor training methods and the absence of training are strong factors which result in staff not being able to function optimally.

This role ambiguity experienced by employees could be reduced if the channels of communication between top management and customer-contact personnel are made more accessible. In order to ensure that communication is not "top-down", that is, from top management down to customer, contact personnel is extremely important so that top management receives feedback about the frustrations and shortcomings at the lower end of the management hierarchy. Top management should follow up on these responses and act on them as soon as possible. Staff need to have confidence to be able to perform optimally. There is a strong correlation between incompetence and low confidence levels. In order to raise confidence levels, staff should receive the necessary training to ensure that they are more comfortable in their positions. Ferguson (in Shames & Glover, 1989:85) states that high employee job satisfaction yields high employee motivation. High motivation yields higher levels of service quality and therefore customer satisfaction yields an

increased volume of business.

4.4.2 Gap 3 Problem: Role conflict

Role conflict is extremely evident in the restaurant industry, as waiters and waitresses are constantly caught between the expectations of management and the demands of customers. Management within organisations are usually profit-driven or production-driven and their expectations are that staff should follow suit, but staff is also expected to deliver service quality. This places even more pressure on customer-contact personnel within restaurants as they are not receiving a very good basic wage or salary and most of their earnings are generated from the tips that they receive from customers. This converts the waiter or waitress into a "salesperson", who is eager to sell their products, sacrificing their role as quality service providers.

Management of restaurants need to realise the value of good personnel. They should reduce the inclination to reduce personnel to salespeople. This could partly be achieved by paying their staff a better basic wage or salary. This would result in them being able to focus on providing better service. In other service organisations, Zeithaml, et al, (1990:98) has identified other factors that would also contribute to overcoming the problem of role conflict, namely:

- Clear job descriptions clearly indicating to staff exactly what their tasks and responsibilities are.

- Time management - to assist staff in prioritising and planning their day.
- A variety of work tasks and frequent breaks for staff to relax and to avoid becoming frustrated in their jobs.

4.4.3 Other Factors that contribute to the widening of gap 3

- Employees not suitable for job - various customer-contact positions within service organisations require that personnel possess certain interpersonal skills in order to perform their work adequately, for example, assertiveness, empathy, sincerity and self-confidence. It happens very often that part-time staff, who are used to fill vital roles, do not have these skills and are therefore unable to perform these tasks effectively. Very little time and money is invested in part-time staff to train them in the vital positions that they hold.
- Employee technology job fit - Staff that are recruited should be carefully selected, to ensure that after training has occurred and large sums of money is invested in the employee, the staff member does not resign or leave to work elsewhere. Unfortunately, employment in the service industry has a very negative connotation attached to it in this country, which further compounds the problem.
- Poor supervisory control - many times there is a lack of synergy between the top management of service organisations and the lower management in terms of service quality. This is as

a result of the performance related yardsticks which are used to measure the performance of customer-contact personnel and these yardsticks not being set in conjunction with the overall service quality objectives of the firm.

- Lack of perceived control - staff may feel that they do not possess the authority to make certain vital decisions. This could be overcome by empowering staff by providing them with the authority and mandate to make certain decisions for themselves. This ultimately results in overall increased performance from staff.

- Lack of teamwork - Zeithaml, et al, (1990:108) states that "Teamwork is the heart of service-quality initiatives - employees need to work together to have service come together for customers". This clearly illustrates that service quality needs to be a well organised team effort in order for it to be successful.

- External customers - It is essential for service providers to educate their customers about the dynamics of service organisations in terms of its' "modus operandi". This would assist in the expectations of customers being readjusted in accordance with the operations and abilities of service providers. For example, if a customer in a restaurant has placed an order for a unique meal and the preparation of the meal requires special conditions under which it will be prepared, the customer should be informed as to the length of preparation time. In doing this, the customer would be better informed as to the length of

time he needs to wait for his meal.

4.4.4 Closing Gap 3: Delivering quality service

Managers need to provide new and current employees with clear job descriptions which stipulate what performance is required from staff. There should be open channels of communication between the various levels of management, including customer-contact personnel. Staff should be regularly evaluated in terms of their performance to determine whether their performance is acceptable to managements' expectations. Training and job-security should be given the necessary attention it deserves. Training should take the form of a structured programme with clearly defined objectives. This will assist staff in increasing their confidence levels and competence resulting in greater role clarity. Staff would therefore feel they are more empowered to deal with challenges that occur in their jobs.

Management of service organisations need to realise that their customer-contact personnel are an integral part of their business. Customer-contact personnel could determine the success or demise of an organisation should they not be able to perform their tasks effectively. Therefore, the right persons for these positions need to be recruited, to ensure that the potential employees have the right personality traits to perform their functions. The stigma attached to being employed in the service sector will take a long time to be removed, this process could be expedited by improving the remuneration of staff employed in the service sector.

4.5 GAP 4: PROMISES NOT BEING KEPT

The difference between the promises of service organisations compared to what it actually delivers is the fourth gap in the service quality model. These promises are made through advertising, personal selling and public relations and results in high customer expectations being formed. This results in the service quality being perceived as being poor when the provided service quality does not meet with the customers' expectations. Manning (1989:50) mentions that advertising works when a unique and meaningful promise is made. It can also do a great deal of damage when claims are not met. Bernbach in (Manning, 1989:50) also states: "The magic is in the product. No matter how skillful you are, you can't invent an advantage that doesn't exist". It therefore appears that at times it is better for the organisation to make no claims at all, as opposed to making promises through advertising and other media that they are unable to keep.

4.5.1 Gap 4 Problem: Inadequate horizontal communication

The communication between various functional departments within the service organisation is essential to its success in achieving a high level of service quality. The various functions within service organisations seldom work harmoniously and there is often conflict between these departments. This has been increasing very dramatically lately, as a result of the decentralised managerial approach where the various operating functions are being operated as separate business entities. This "business within a business" creates fierce competition between the various functions as they are now profit-

driven and their objectives might be in contrast with those objectives of the organisation as a whole. Communication between these functions are therefore extremely essential to achieve the common goals of the organisation.

Any promises made by the advertising department need to be made with input from all the departments that will be affected by the advertisement, to ensure that the promises that are made can be kept. Regular inter-departmental meetings to discuss new developments also help overcome this lack of communication between departments and is also a useful team-building exercise. There also needs to be a standardisation of policies and procedures within the branches of service organisations to ensure that the promises that are made can be kept throughout all the organisations' branches.

4.5.2 Gap 4 Problem: Propensity to overpromise

Competition in the restaurant industry is intense and this seems to be a common tendency in most industries in the service sector. This results in organisations constantly vying for the support and patronage of customers to try and improve their market share. Service organisations need to realise that when unrealistic promises are made which are impossible to keep, they might enjoy an initial increase in short term profits as a result of once-off customer purchases. However, they will eventually lose the support of a potential loyal customer because the customers' expectations are not being met. This ultimately results in no repeat business upon which most organisations are dependant. Pitt (1991:52) mentions that a propensity to over-promise might simply be a nice way of saying that

you are lying. Promising is one of the easiest things to do in business; delivering is one of the most difficult. Service reliability means keeping the service promise - doing what you say you will do to and for the customer. There are three main sources of service promises according to Anderson & Zemke (1991:12), namely:

- Personal promises: the majority of customer service promises are made by individuals.
- Organisational promises: these could take the form of direct and indirect promises. Direct promises can be made through advertising and other correspondence, while indirect promises are often taken for granted by the customer.
- Expected promises: your customers bring expectations with them to every service transaction based on their past experiences with you and other service providers.

It is important to develop appropriate and effective communication strategies about service quality that is well communicated throughout the organisation. Attention must be given to dealing with quality dimensions and features that are most important to customers. These aspects should accurately reflect what customers actually receive in the service encounter in order to train and help customers understand their role in performing the service (Pitt, 1991:52).

4.5.3 Closing Gap 4: Ensuring promises match delivery

Advertising claims that are made should be realistic and not exaggerated, the question that service providers should ask themselves when they are uncertain as to whether the claim that is being made is realistic or not is: "Can we fulfill those promises we are making?" Actively involve the staff who are to be affected by the advertisement, by allowing them to be part of the decision-making process surrounding the advertisement. Building team spirit could be achieved through regular staff "Break-aways" where all staff from various functions within the organisation spend time together away from the work environment. This exercise is extremely useful for team-building and also to open the communication channels within departments.

There should also be consistency throughout the organisation, especially in restaurants which have more than one branch, there could be consistency in the following areas:

- layout and decorations,
- service quality offering,
- staff training,
- menu and
- staff apparel.

Standardisation of these functions, as mentioned earlier are extremely useful to ensure consistency and uniformity in the service offering. This standardisation of functions should not be implemented at the expense of offering better service by employees not

performing their functions correctly. In the service industry competition is intense, therefore organisations are constantly making promises that they know would be difficult to meet. This trend has become a "norm" and organisations which do not make these claims feel that they might be placing themselves at a disadvantage if they do not follow suit. There could be a possibility of an initial drop in profits should service-providers start to make more "realistic" claims in their advertisements. However, in the longer term, these companies could only benefit as customers become accustomed to the ability of these organisations to consistently fulfill their promises.

4.6 GAP 5: THE EXPECTATIONS-PERCEPTIONS GAP

As stated in chapter 1 of the study, Gaps 1 through 4 are the internal service quality problems within the organisation. These gaps result in a customer formulating a perception about the service quality that was or is being offered. This perception of the service quality that was offered is formulated using the five dimensions of service quality as the main criteria, namely; tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. The expectation the customer has of the service quality has also been pre-determined by aspects such as; word-of-mouth communication, personal needs and past experiences. The expectations are then compared to the perception of the service that has been delivered, resulting in Gap 5 being formed, namely service quality. Should the perception of the service exceed the expectations of the consumer, the service quality would be regarded as being "good". If the perception of the service offering is below the consumers' expectation, then the service will

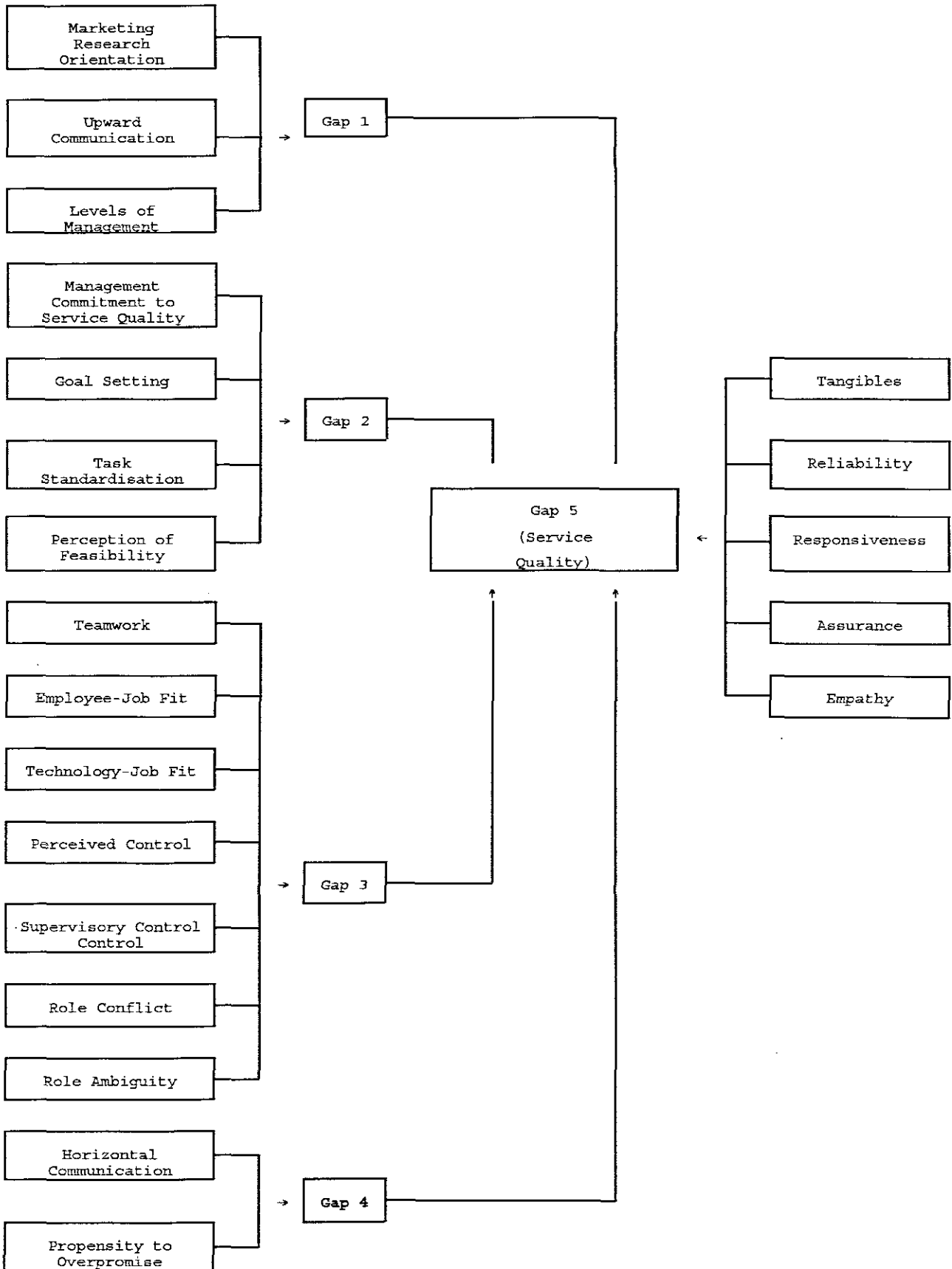
be perceived as being "poor". Satisfactory service arises when perceived service equals expected service.

4.7 SUMMARY

Gaps 1 to 4 are the internal service quality problems that service providers are continuously striving to reduce. In the attempts made to reduce the size of these gaps it must always be remembered that these discrepancies will always be present, as the service industry is people-driven. The ultimate objective of the "perfect" service quality offering therefore is a concept that is constantly strived towards, but will never be attained. This should not deter service organisations from attempting to improve on their service quality offering.

Gaps 1 through 4 all contribute to the formation of Gap 5, which is the gap between a customers' expectations and perceptions of service quality. The factors that are mentioned throughout this chapter in turn contribute to the formation of Gaps 1 to 4. Gap 5 is determined by the customers evaluation of the five dimensions which are regarded as essential when formulating an opinion of the service quality being offered. Figure 4.5 depicts the extended gaps model of service quality.

FIGURE 4.5 - THE EXTENDED GAPS MODEL OF SERVICE QUALITY



Source: Zeithaml, et al (1990:131)

It would therefore be useful to use Servqual to capture customers' perceptions and the measures of Gaps 1 through 4 for managers and employees, as the study proposes to do in restaurants. A logical progression would then be to reduce Gaps 1 through 3 sequentially. Gap 4, can be closed before working on the others by managing customers' expectations - bringing expectations in line with actual delivery by lowering expectations rather than improving service delivery (Zeithaml, et al, 1990:136).

In order to implement service quality programmes to improve service, service providers need to change the manner in which management think. The people with leadership responsibilities need to start realising that quality is not only their responsibility but everyone's responsibility, it is therefore essential that they realise this in order to start working on closing the gaps.

CHAPTER 5

**THE CURRENT STATE OF SERVICE QUALITY IN
RESTAURANTS IN THE SOUTHERN SUBURBS
OF CAPE TOWN**

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CHAPTER 5

THE CURRENT STATE OF SERVICE QUALITY IN RESTAURANTS IN THE SOUTHERN SUBURBS OF CAPE TOWN

5.1 INTRODUCTION

It is essential to assess the current level of service quality being offered by restaurants because of its importance to the tourism industry in the Western Cape region, more specifically to the southern suburbs of Cape Town. The local restaurant industry in Cape Town needs to assess its image and service quality levels as perceived by its consumers because of the significant impact that these aspects have on tourism. The image that Cape Town has as a tourist destination has been tarnished by the high crime rate and public violence. It is therefore important to ensure that the service quality of restaurants compensates to some degree for these negative aspects.

The service quality has been assessed using an empirical investigation with one of the objectives being to identify the internal problem areas that restaurant owners need to focus on to improve the service quality of their restaurants. The questionnaire attempted to embrace all the possible problem areas that normally result in lowering the service quality levels. These problems areas have been formulated within the framework of the five dimensions of service

quality. This will assist service providers to better understand the needs of their consumers with the aim of using consumers as the starting point of their entire marketing and promotional efforts.

5.2 THE PRIMARY RESEARCH PROJECT

The following are the main components of the primary research project:

- The objectives on which the research project is based.
- The research process which consists of:
 - The geographical scope of the project
 - The selection of respondents
 - The development of the questionnaire, that is the modifications of the Servqual model.
 - Collection of the data.
 - Analysis of the data.
 - Evaluation of the findings
- The results of the research.

5.2.1 Statement of objectives

The primary objective is to assess the service quality of restaurants in the southern suburbs of Cape Town using a modified version of the Servqual model.

The secondary objective is to measure customer expectations within restaurants. The study also determines in order of importance the features pertaining to restaurants which are important to customers.

5.2.2 The research process

The research was conducted using the modified Servqual model (Addendum 5A). The respondents were requested to complete the questionnaire after they have completed a meal or when they have been adequately exposed to the service offering in order to evaluate the restaurant. The questionnaire was completed and collected immediately, which therefore resulted in a high response rate.

5.2.2.1 The geographical scope of the project

The geographical scope of the project ranges from Simons Town to Cape Town. There are many exclusive restaurants and family restaurants within this geographical area and the study therefore attempted to attain a diverse spread of the various restaurants to ensure that the results are not specific to a certain type of restaurant and that the restaurants included in the sample are representative of the restaurant population in Cape Town.

Figure 5.1 depicts the various restaurants that have been selected for the sample together with a brief description of the restaurant and their locations.

FIGURE 5.1 - RESTAURANTS INCLUDED IN SAMPLE WITH DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION

NO	RESTAURANT	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
1.	Mortons	Victoria & Alfred Waterfront: Cape Town	Lively atmosphere; enjoys high customer turnover, full a la carte menu; a mix of tourists and locals.
2.	St. Elmo's Pizzeria	Victoria & Alfred Waterfront: Cape Town	Popular family restaurant, specialists in pizzas and pastas; fun atmosphere; predominantly supported by locals.
3.	Hildebrand	Victoria & Alfred Waterfront: Cape Town	Ethnic restaurant, specialising in Italian food, very conservative, old restaurant that moved from Cape Town city bowl to the Cape Town waterfront; target market age between 30-60 years.
4.	Bukhara	Central Cape Town	New restaurant; Indian restaurant, very trendy catering for the upper markets.
5.	The Blue Plate	Central Cape Town	A very popular restaurant; attracts middle of the market consumers; full a la carte menu.
6.	Rustica	Central Cape Town	Trendy new restaurant; minimal decorations and atmospherics; caters for young persons between the ages of 25-35 years.
7.	Floris Smit Huijs	Central Cape Town	Specialists in lunches; does little business at night; targets the business-oriented market of Cape Town.
8.	The Africa Cafe	Observatory	Diverse target market from tourists and politicians to students; an ethnic restaurant specialising in African food.
9.	The Spur Restaurant	Newlands	Family restaurant, fun atmosphere; lower market appeal; offers value for money.
10.	Barristers	Rondebosch	Caters for locals, very trendy, a la carte menu, sophisticated customers.
11.	Bacini's	Rondebosch	Caters predominantly for lower markets, specialists in pizzas and pastas, younger target market 20-35; predominantly students and business persons in the surrounding areas.
12.	Saddles	Claremont	Halaal restaurant, family restaurant, caters specifically for Muslim community from the Southern suburbs.
13.	The Curry Tavern	Plumstead	No tourists; very "homely" atmosphere; supported extensively by local residents; specialists in Indian food.
14.	Sniffy and Dugs	Lakeside	Middle and lower market appeal; a la carte menu; "neighbourhood" restaurants supported extensively by local residents;
15.	The Brass Bell	Kalk Bay	Popular tourist location, diverse target market, middle to upmarket focus; extensive seafood menu.

5.2.2.2 The choice of respondents

The demographic profile of the respondent is not very specific, because the selection of the respondent was difficult to control. The general profile of the respondent includes all persons eighteen

years and above. Preference was given to English-speaking respondents. Both tourists and local residents were included in the survey. The restaurants included in the sample ensures that the respondents are representative of the local population in Cape Town, including tourists.

5.2.2.3 The modifications of the Servqual model

The modifications have been made to the Servqual model in such a manner that the model would be suitable to measure service quality in local restaurants.

The Servqual model has been divided into three general parts.

Part A - Measures the expectations that the respondent has of the service quality of restaurants on a general basis using a set of twenty-two statements, where responses are indicated on a Likert-type scale.

Part B - Is the section that allows the respondent to prioritise the dimensions that is regarded as being important.

Part C - Allows the respondent to evaluate the service quality that was offered at a specific restaurant and indicate these perceptions on a Likert-type scale in a matching set of twenty-two statements.

These twenty-two statements would also embrace the five dimensions and the grouping has been arranged as follows:

<u>Dimension</u>	<u>Statements pertaining to the Dimension</u>
Tangibles	Statements 1 - 5
Reliability	Statements 6 - 9
Responsiveness	Statements 10 - 13
Assurance	Statements 14 - 17
Empathy	Statements 18 - 22

The format of the original Servqual model was maintained with the only change being the tangibles dimension being broadened to include an additional statement because of its importance to consumers in restaurants. The reliability dimension therefore contains one less statement.

The modified Servqual model was tested beforehand to ensure that the respondents understand the various statements.

5.2.2.4 Computing the Servqual gap scores

The Servqual score that is to be calculated is an unweighted score which does not take into account the importance of the dimensions. Assessing the quality of service using Servqual involves computing the difference between the ratings customers assign to the paired expectation/perception statements. Specifically, a Gap 5 or Servqual score for each statement pair, for each customer, is computed as follows:

$$\text{Servqual score} = \text{Perception Score} - \text{Expectation score}$$

For each statement within a dimension the average score was calcula-

ted, for example, by totalling the value that was allocated by the respondent to both the expectations statements and the perceptions statements, then by dividing it by the number of respondents. This was done to determine the general tendencies of the responses to both the expectations and perceptions of respondents. The Servqual score was calculated by subtracting the mean perception score from the mean expectation score, a negative score would indicate that the service quality never met with the customers' expectations. The greater the size of the negative score the poorer the quality of the service that was delivered. A positive score would indicate that the customers' expectations were exceeded, while a zero indicates that the customer is satisfied.

A restaurant's quality of service along each of the five dimensions can then be assessed across all customers by averaging their Servqual scores on statements making up the dimension. For instance, if N customers responded to the survey, the average Servqual score along each dimension is obtained through the following two steps:

1. For each customer, add the Servqual scores on the statements pertaining to the dimension and divide the sum by the number of statements making up the dimension, this will determine the mean difference for each dimension.
2. The dimensions can then be prioritised based on their scores. This will assist in determining where restaurant managers should start to improve their service quality (Zeithaml, et al, 1990:177). The lower the Servqual score, or should the Serv-

qual score attained be negative, would indicate that these dimensions should be first priority when the corrective measures are taken to ensure better service quality. This can then be used in conjunction with Section B of the questionnaire where the respondent was requested to prioritise the dimensions.

As the questionnaires were completed after the respondents had completed their meal, the response rate of the study was high. Of the one hundred and eighty questionnaires that were initially intended for the study one hundred and seventy-one questionnaires were included in the analysis, as five questionnaires were incomplete and four were spoiled, the response was therefore ninety-five percent.

5.2.2.5 Analysis of the data

The empirical research project was largely an opinion survey, and therefore no detailed statistical analysis was done. The one hundred and seventy one questionnaires were coded using the statistical programme SPSS version 3.0 and this resulted in each questionnaire having forty nine variables. The forty nine variables consist of the following:

Variables 1 - 22	:	Section A	of	the	questionnaire	(Expectations)
Variables 23 - 27	:	Section B	of	the	questionnaire	(Dimensions)
Variables 28 - 49	:	Section C	of	the	questionnaire	(Perceptions)

5.3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.3.1 The Servqual Scores

The respondent was requested to select values ranging from 1 to 7 on a Likert-type scale which would be the response to various statements in the questionnaire. Should the respondent select a number ranging from 1 to 3 it would indicate that the respondent strongly disagrees with the statement. A selection of a number 4 indicates that the respondent was unable to provide an opinion about the item and therefore remains undecided. Choices of numbers ranging from 5 to 7 would indicate that the respondent strongly agrees with the statement. The selection of a 1 or a 7 would be the two extreme variables. From Table 5.1 these tendencies will be observed as this table will depict these opinions with regard to a customer's expectation of service quality in restaurants in the southern suburbs of Cape Town. These tendencies will be based on the responses of 171 respondents across the 15 restaurants which constituted the sample. These tendencies will indicate the trend across all 49 variables which comprise the questionnaire that was used.

The trends will be indicated, using a percentage value which totals 100 percent, this value represents the 171 respondents which is the sample size.

TABLE 5.1 - STATEMENTS 1-22: SECTION A: CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
	Strongly Disagree	Undecided	Strongly Agree
1. Appealing physical facilities	1,2	2,9	95,9
2. Excellent atmospherics present	5,3	4,7	90
3. Well groomed employees	4,7	6,4	88,9
4. Attractive materials displayed	4,1	8,2	87,7
5. Partitioning for smoking and non non-smoking sections	12,3	6,4	81,3
6. Promises are regularly met	7	4,1	88,9
7. Sincere interest in solving problems	2,3	3,5	94,2
8. Perform service right first time	3	6,4	90,6
9. Error-free service provided	8,2	11,7	80,1
10. Informing customer when services will be performed	12,3	9,9	77,8
11. Providing prompt service	1,8	4,7	93,5
12. Willingness to help	2,4	0,6	97
13. Excellent preparation of meal	2,9	5,8	91,3
14. Staff instill confidence in customers	3,6	4,1	92,3
15. Restaurants allow customers sufficient time to finish meal	1,8	7,6	90,6
16. Employees are courteous	2,4	6,4	91,2
17. Employees are knowledgeable about products	4,7	2,9	92,4
18. Personalised attention is provided	4,1	4,7	91,2
19. Provides convenient operating hours	7,1	12,3	80,6
20. Customers are pressurised to buy specials on the menu	5,9	6,4	87,7
21. Customers best interest kept at heart	2,9	5,8	91,3
22. Employees understand customers needs	2,4	8,8	88,8

In Table 5.2 which is the section of the questionnaire where the respondents were requested to allocate a total of 100 points across the five dimensions of the Servqual model. This 100 points was then scaled down to 10 points. Therefore the weighting for each statement is allocated as follows:

Not Important: 0 - 1 percent value attached

Equally Important: 2 percent value attached (across all five dimensions)

Very Important: 3 - 5 percent value attached

TABLE 5.2 - STATEMENTS 23-27: SECTION B: PRIORITISING THE DIMENSIONS ACCORDING TO THEIR IMPORTANCE TO CUSTOMERS

Item	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
	Not Important	Equally Important	Very Important
23. Tangible aspects of restaurant	11,1	52,6	36,3
24. Performing the service dependably and accurately	22,8	58,5	18,7
25. Prompt and helpful service	21,6	62	16,4
26. Knowledgeable and courteous staff	36,8	55	8,2
27. Provide caring and personalised attention	32,2	54,4	13,4

TABLE 5.3 - STATEMENTS 28-49: SECTION C: PERCEPTION OF SERVICE QUALITY

Item	Factor 7	Factor 8	Factor 9
	Strongly Disagree	Undecided	Strongly Agree
28. Appealing physical facilities	12,9	15,8	71,3
29. Excellent atmospherics present	18,1	18,7	63,2
30. Well groomed employees	5,3	19,3	75,4
31. Attractive materials displayed	14,6	21,1	64,3
32. Partitioning for smoking and non-smoking sections	29,8	12,9	57,3
33. Promises are regularly met	7	26,3	66,7
34. Sincere interest in solving problems	5,9	17	77,1
35. Perform service right first time	8,2	17,5	74,3
36. Error-free service provided	17,5	18,1	64,4
37. Informing customer when services will be performed	29,2	21,6	49,2
38. Providing prompt service	6,4	14	79,6
39. Willingness to help	5,3	12,3	82,4
40. Excellent preparation of meal	5,3	15,8	78,9
41. Staff instill confidence in customers	13,5	14	72,5
42. Restaurants allow sufficient time for customers to finish meal	7,6	11,7	80,7
43. Employees are courteous	2,9	6,4	90,7
44. Employees are knowledgeable about products	5,3	18,7	76
45. Personalised service is provided	7,6	15,2	77,2
46. Provides convenient operating hours	6,4	15,2	78,4
47. Customers are pressurised to buy specials on menu	4,1	6,4	89,5
48. Customers best interest kept at heart	11,1	19,9	69
49. Employees understand customers needs	7	18,7	74,3

Respondent selections: 1 - 3: Strongly Disagree
 4: Undecided
 5 - 7: Strongly Agree

Note: Values expressed as percentages

In Table 5.1, there seems to be a strong loading on Factor 3 across the items 1 to 22 which clearly indicates the very high expectations of consumers with regards to the service quality as offered by restaurants. These very high expectations places pressure on the service provider as there is little room for error in their service offering. Item 12 clearly illustrate this aspect as 97 percent of the respondents displayed a "strongly agree" tendency, of which 64,7 percent selected the value of 7 on the Likert-type scale which only allows the restaurant the opportunity to meet these expectations ensuring that the customer is satisfied. This would be achieved should the respondent allocate a value of 7 on the mirror side of the questionnaire in the perceptions section. The Servqual score would then be calculated as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Servqual score} &= \text{Perceptions} - \text{Expectations} \\ &= 7 - 7 \\ &= 0\end{aligned}$$

The zero indicates that the customer is satisfied with the service that was received.

Section B of the questionnaire which represents factors 4 to 6 of Table 5.2 indicates the value respondents attach to the five dimensions of the Servqual model. There is seemingly a more significant loading from items 23 to 27 on factor 5 which is the "Equally Important" factor. This implies that the majority of the respondents viewed the five dimensions of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy as being equally important. However, item 23 which deals with the tangibles dimensions has a 36,3 percent loading of factor 6 signalling the importance that

customers attach to the tangibles dimension. It can also be seen in Table 5.1 and Figure 5.2 that this is the dimension that incurred the highest Servqual score, therefore the worst service quality perception compared to the other dimensions. The other interesting aspect in the dimensions aspect is that items 26 and 27 which measures the value that consumers attach to the assurance and empathy dimensions had scores on factor 4 of 36,8 and 32,2 percent respectively, indicating that these dimensions were not important to consumers. However, the respondents' responses in the expectations section of the questionnaire, ranging from item 14 to item 22, remain high.

The perception aspect of Table 5.3 is heavily loaded from items 28 to 49 onto factor 9 which indicates that the respondents' responses varied between the range of 5 and 7 on the Likert scale. This should indicate general satisfaction with the service provided. However as most of the expectations scores were higher, it indicates that the general perception of the service provided is below the expectations of the consumer.

The Servqual scores were calculated by subtracting the mean score of a specific variable in the perceptions section of the questionnaire from the mean of the corresponding statement in the expectations section of the questionnaire. As stated earlier negative scores indicate dissatisfaction with the service quality, while positive scores would indicate satisfaction with the service quality. Larger positive scores could even indicate that excellent service quality is being perceived, depending on the value of the Servqual score.

The various Servqual scores are depicted in Table 5.4 which represents the overall expectations, perceptions and gaps of service quality in restaurants.

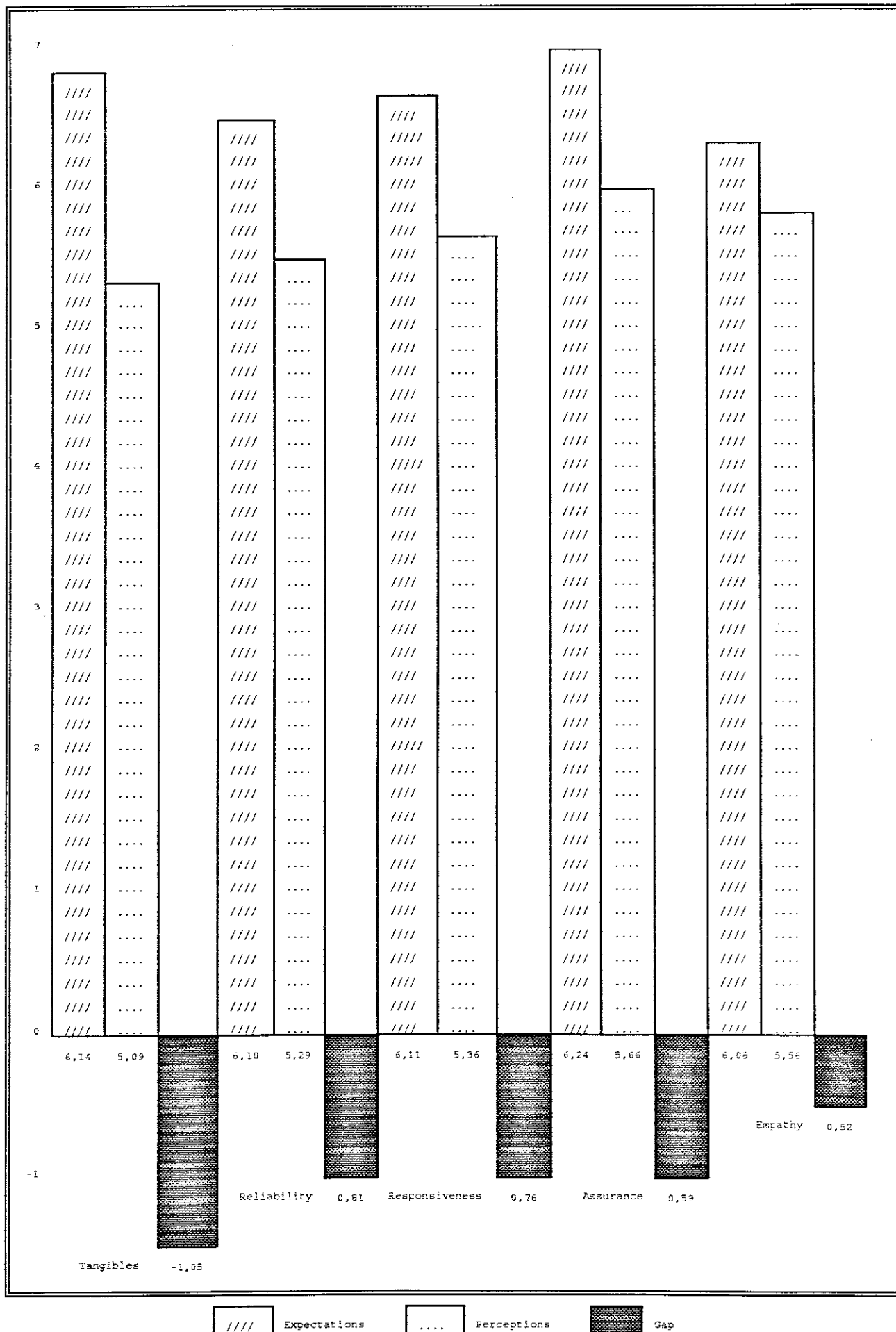
TABLE 5.4 - OVERALL EXPECTATIONS, PERCEPTIONS AND GAPS OF SERVICE**QUALITY IN RESTAURANTS**

Item	Expectations	Perceptions	Difference
1. Appealing physical facilities	6,456	5,322	-1,134
2. Excellent atmospherics	6,082	4,965	-1,117
3. Well groomed employees	6,158	5,415	-0,743
4. Attractive materials	6,082	5,070	-1,012
5. Partitioning for smoking and non-smoking sections	5,906	4,678	-1,228
6. Promises are regularly met	6,105	5,228	-0,877
7. Sincere interest in solving problems	6,427	5,544	-0,883
8. Perform service right first time	6,164	5,351	-0,813
9. Error-free service provided	5,053	5,614	-0,655
10. Informing customer when services will be performed	5,532	4,398	-1,134
11. Providing prompt service	6,240	5,614	-0,626
12. Willingness to help	6,444	5,754	-0,69
13. Preparation of meal	6,234	5,661	-0,573
14. Staff instill confidence in customers	6,140	5,292	-0,848
15. Allow sufficient time to enjoy meal	6,304	5,830	-0,474
16. Employees are courteous	6,310	5,988	-0,322
17. Employees are knowledgeable about products	6,205	5,509	-0,696
18. Personalised attention is provided	6,175	5,509	-0,666
19. Convenient operating hours	5,725	5,398	-0,327
20. Pressuring customers to buy specials	6,146	6,117	-0,029
21. Keep customers' interest at heart	6,199	5,275	-0,924
22. Employees understand needs of customers	6,152	5,509	-0,643

This is graphically illustrated in Figure 5.2 which illustrates the mean difference between the Servqual scores of the expectations and perceptions aspects of the Servqual model in terms of the dimensions

of the model.

FIGURE 5.2 - THE MEAN DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS AND PERCEPTIONS



From Table 5.4 it can therefore be derived that the service quality currently being offered by restaurants included in the sample does not meet with the expectations of customers as in all the items negative Servqual scores were calculated. These negative scores range from a very large gap score of -1,228 for item 5 which is the partitioning of the smoking and non-smoking sections in restaurants not being clearly demarcated or the partitioning not being acceptable to consumers. The smallest Servqual gap score was -0,029 which was for item 20, indicating that customers do not feel pressurised into buying meals that are being "sold" to them by waiters and waitresses. Another fairly large gap score was for item 1 which has a -1,1374 Servqual score which suggests that the physical facilities of restaurants are not visually appealing. The atmospherics which represents item 2 also indicates a significant gap in the service quality as the Servqual score is -1,117. Other items which exceeded minus one are items 4 (Attractive materials) and 10 (Informing customers when various services will be performed). These items had Servqual scores of -1,012 and -1,134 respectively. As mentioned earlier the main cause of the service quality shortfalls is as a result of the high expectations that the customers have set, this therefore results in the service quality being perceived as being poor.

There were certain items where the Servqual gap score was less significant indicating that customer satisfaction is not very difficult to attain and only requires a bit more effort and commitment from service providers, namely:

- item 16: Servqual score of -0,322, indicating that

employees need to improve on their interpersonal skills

- item 19: Servqual score of -0,327, which depicts that the operating hours of restaurants needs to be improved slightly to ensure customer satisfaction

The other mean Servqual scores are more significant in their difference, Table 5.5 depicts the overall mean difference by dimension.

TABLE 5.5 - MEAN SERVQUAL SCORES BY DIMENSION

DIMENSIONS	STATEMENTS	MEAN SERVQUAL SCORES
Tangibles	1 - 5	-1,047
Reliability	6 - 9	-0,807
Responsiveness	10 - 13	-0,756
Assurance	14 - 17	-0,585
Empathy	18 - 22	-0,518

From Table 5.5 it can be derived that the tangibles and reliability dimensions have the greatest service quality shortfall. This is contrary to the usual pattern as the tangibles gap is usually the least serious. This tendency was also found in Pitt (1991:70) in his study of the service quality of airline service. In this study it was also found that the tangibles gap had the most significant mean Servqual score. The second highest Servqual score in this study was the reliability dimension which had a mean Servqual score of -0,807. This is the dimension where corrective measures could

be implemented with relative ease with minimal expenditure as opposed to the tangibles dimension which could prove to be costly to reduce the size of the service quality gap.

5.4 POSSIBLE FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO POOR SERVICE QUALITY

The service that is currently being provided does not meet with the expectations of consumers. The service offering is not entirely poor, however, because of the increase in the consumers' level of expectation it results in a poor service quality perception being formed. This gap in the service quality could widen with time as the service offering lags further behind the expectations of consumers.

These are some of the possible problem areas that could help reduce the size of gap 5 if the corrective measures are implemented.

Some of the problems that were identified are:

- The absence of general atmospherics that create the "perfect setting" which are specific to a particular type of restaurant. The written materials associated with providing the service, namely: menus, signs and general posters need to be more visually appealing, some menus were old and showed visible signs of wear and tear.

- One of the major shortcomings that had the highest Servqual score was the poor or lack of clear demarcations for non-smoking and smoking sections. This problem needs to receive the attention it deserves and restaurant owners can no longer afford to have ineffective partitioning in place that serves no purpose in terms of preventing smoke from cigarettes to circulate throughout the restaurant.

- There are too many errors which are occurring with regard to providing service quality. These range from incorrect orders being presented to customers to meals not prepared adequately and a fairly common problem of incorrect bills being presented. Restaurant staff are not spending sufficient time ensuring that these aspects are correct and they need to be more thorough by being absolutely sure what the customers require. Consumers are not overly concerned with the speed with which an order is taken down, but problems occur should the meal be presented incorrectly.

- Staff are not adequately trained to deal with customers. Waiters and waitresses do not possess the necessary skills and product knowledge to deal with customers to ensure that their needs are consistently met. This service quality shortfall is not a problem at the lower middle and upper managerial levels, however this does seem to be a shortfall especially among casual waiters and waitresses. These casual staff are often responsible for working over weekends and generally over the busier periods when most permanent staff are relieved of their duties. This practice places the casual employee under lots

of pressure as they are not sufficiently skilled to deal with these situations.

- Consumers have to be "trained" to ensure that all unrealistic expectations are reduced or eliminated. This is a long term process, but there are many tactics that could be implemented with immediate effect. This avoids the dissatisfaction that will occur after the meal is presented and improves the overall perceived service quality. Customers are not being informed if unforeseen circumstances have occurred that could hamper the service offering. Irrespective of how insignificant the problem might appear, the customer needs to have knowledge of the problem.

- Another problem that has been observed is that at times the staff member responsible for the "Moment of truth", that is, when the customer steps into a restaurant, has been distracted or is busy performing other tasks. This results in the customer entering the restaurant having to wait before being seated. This immediately results in the negative perceptions being formed even before the restaurant had the opportunity to deliver quality service. This function of attending to customers when they step into a restaurant needs to be constantly attended to by a competent personnel member who is able to project the necessary image and set the "tone" for the rest of the service offering.

5.5 SUMMARY

This chapter deals with the analysis and interpretation of the questionnaires. Various tendencies were identified, together with the calculation of the various Servqual scores. These Servqual scores determined the perception of service quality by the respondents. All the items included in the questionnaire displayed negative Servqual scores indicating that the service quality is being perceived as being poor.

The results does not imply that the service quality of all restaurants is poor, but the high expectations certainly impacted on the final result. The findings also displayed an unusual tendency that the tangibles dimension had the highest Servqual score implying that the service quality in this dimension is the lowest compared to the other dimensions. This should be one of the main starting points for restaurant staff.

Possible problem areas that were identified, namely the lack of general atmospherics, absence of effective smoking and non-smoking partitioning or ventilation, errors in service delivery, staff poorly trained, poor first impressions are created and the very high expectations of consumers.

To improve the quality of service is a process which will not be resolved immediately. However, restauranteers need to embark on these service quality journeys and in doing this, enhance the overall perception and image of Cape Town as a tourist destination.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will provide a brief summary of all the chapters. The following aspects will also be included in this chapter:

- a) Conclusions on the basis of problems that have been mentioned in Chapter 1.
- b) Recommendations for the improvement of service quality in restaurants in the southern suburbs of Cape Town in terms of the problems mentioned in Chapter 5.
- c) Possible opportunities for future research are identified.

6.2 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

The primary objective of the study has been to measure the service quality of sit-down restaurants in the southern suburbs of Cape Town.

The secondary objectives are directly related to the primary objective. The secondary objectives were:

- assessing the expectations of customers with regard to service quality in restaurants.
- comparing the customers' perception of the service quality to that of the customers' expectations, of the service quality, to determine possible shortfall areas that require improvement.
- conducting an in-depth literature search in the area of service quality. This represented the literacy dimension of the study.

There is a brief summary which follows each chapter in the study. For the purposes of clarification further summaries of each chapter will follow:

Chapter 1 provides the entire background to the study. A detailed description of the Servqual model is given, which is the framework around which the questionnaire was developed. Other tools for measuring service quality are also identified together with their related problems and objectives. A detailed account of a definition of terms which was used extensively throughout the project is mentioned in this chapter. The methodology and the intended programme of study are also established.

Chapter 2 - This chapter deals extensively with the concepts of customer satisfaction, customer expectations, customer service and how these concepts impact on service quality. Mention is made of the modus operandi of service quality programmes and the requirements that are essential in ensuring that these programmes succeed. One of the main ingredients that is needed to ensure the

success of any service quality programme is the total commitment of staff. The importance of the continuous control and monitoring of these service quality programmes is emphasised to ensure that corrective steps are taken prior to the failure of the programme.

Chapter 3 - Extensive discussion and scrutiny is done of the various tools that are available to measure service quality. There are many suitable tools that can be used to measure service quality, with the most common tool being the Servqual model. The views and opinions of prominent researchers who have made extensive use of the Servqual model is presented. They provide contrasting arguments both for and against the use of the Servqual model. The Servqual model has been used under South African conditions in the past and it has proven very successful; this further justifies the use of this specific tool to measure service quality.

Chapter 4 - The gaps of the Servqual model are expounded upon, together with the effect that these gaps have on service quality, specifically gap 5. Further mention is made of the elusiveness of service quality. As mentioned, excellent service quality is a goal that needs to be strived towards, but "perfect" service quality will never be attained. Numerous factors which constitute the various gaps of the Servqual model are discussed and how these factors contribute to the formulation of each gap, together with which factors assist in closing the four gaps, hereby reducing the size of gap 5 and ultimately improving service quality.

Chapter 5 - The analysis and interpretations of the questionnaire is conducted. The Servqual scores are calculated and in doing this, various conclusions have been drawn. The general perception is that the service quality of restaurants is below expectation. At best in a few cases the service was perceived as being "good", but the general overall trend is that customers are not satisfied with the service offering. There is a tendency of customers to set high expectations and in doing so, place tremendous pressure on service providers, thus making it extremely difficult for them to satisfy their consumers.

The Servqual score of the tangibles dimension of the Servqual model was the highest, implying that the perceptions of service quality in this area is very poor. The smoking and non-smoking partitioning within restaurants is important to customers, but very little has been done to ensure that this meets with the customers' expectations. Improvements need to be made in a number of areas to enhance the overall perception of service quality within restaurants in the southern suburbs of Cape Town, to ultimately improve the image of Cape Town as a tourist destination.

Chapter 6 entails the summaries of the chapters together with the conclusions of the study. The limitations and recommendations are stated here and possible areas for future research in the area of service quality within restaurants have been identified.

6.3 LIMITATIONS

There are a few limitations that has presented itself during the period the study was conducted, namely:

- Respondents, when completing the questionnaire, specifically the expectations section, had the tendency to allocate a value seven to each expectation. Respondents never gave enough thought to each statement in this section. This could be indirectly related to the length of the questionnaire.

- The sample included many tourists, as many of the restaurants are popular tourist restaurants. There could therefore be certain responses that were made without the respondent fully understanding the nature of the question or statement because English is not their first language.

- There were also local residents who regularly frequent certain restaurants and their responses could contain an element of bias, as they do not want to present the restaurant in a negative light.

6.4 CONCLUSIONS

There are a number of problems that have been identified earlier in Chapter 1. They are summarised as follows:

- lack of knowledge of consumer expectations and the perception

of the service quality.

- untrained staff who lack the specific skills required to deliver customer satisfaction.
- impersonal and uncaring service delivery by staff in general.

The empirical investigation validated the problems that have been identified.

This was evidenced by the Servqual scores that measured these aspects.

As the problems were validated, the following conclusions have been drawn.

- The consumers' perception of service quality as offered by restaurants in the southern suburbs of Cape Town is generally perceived as being below satisfaction.
- It was also noted that the service quality that is being offered is of a fair standard. The poor perception that occurred is as a direct result of the very high expectations that have been set by consumers. This is evident as there was a heavy loading on factor 3 across the items 1 to 22 which indicates these high expectations.
- Consumers have very high expectations of the service offering of restaurants and this impacts significantly on their overall

perception of service quality.

- Tangible features are important to consumers, not only the quality of food, but also the general atmosphere that is created within restaurants. Aspects such as decorations, music and materials need to be more appealing. The largest Servqual score was recorded in the tangibles dimension, implying that the largest gap in service quality was perceived here. An extremely common dissatisfaction that was noted in the empirical investigation was the acute dissatisfaction with the smoking and non-smoking arrangements that restaurants have made.
- The service offering is also perceived as being unreliable and inconsistent. There are still too many errors creeping into the service offering.
- Staff generally only do what is required of them to ensure customer satisfaction and do not focus on the finer detail that is required in delivering quality service.
- The value that customers attach to the importance of the five dimensions of the Servqual model is fairly uniform in the scores that the customers have allocated to each dimension. Customers seem to believe that the dimensions of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy all need to be present and equally focussed on by staff to ensure customer satisfaction.

- The delivery of quality service requires the constant commitment of staff. Staff need to focus on ensuring that the finer detail in delivering quality service is not neglected, as this severely impacts on the perception of service quality. To mention an example, the manner in which a staff member holds the cutlery could impact poorly on the overall perception of service offering.

- The Servqual model is a useful tool for measuring service quality. However, a common problem that was observed was the length of the questionnaire. It was found to be useful to read out the statements to the respondents, then asking them for their response.

- It was also noted that some respondents were not critical enough in terms of their perceptions of service quality. This is as a result of many respondents being "regulars" at certain restaurants. They therefore feel obligated to respond positively in terms of their perception of the service quality that they have received. It would however be extremely difficult to completely eliminate this element of bias creeping into a study of this nature.

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the recommendations that could be considered to improve the quality of service within restaurants:

- A complete "paradigm shift" in managerial thinking in terms of service quality by placing customer satisfaction and customer service as their organisation's ultimate objectives. This can be achieved by using the customer and the customers' expectations as the focal point and seeing customers as the "reason for their existence" and every function that is to be performed should in some way contribute to total customer satisfaction.

- The total commitment of owners, managers and staff alike to the implementation of service quality programmes. There need to be "visible signs" of top management commitment to these programmes to ensure that customer-contact personnel remain loyal to these programmes.

- Ensuring that staff are well trained and re-trained, properly screened and ensuring that they possess the necessary interpersonal skills to perform their functions well. Should shortcomings be observed in any of these facets, the corrective measures in terms of supplementary training need to be conducted.

- The tangible aspects associated with delivering quality service need to be visually appealing and the physical facilities need to be regularly maintained to ensure that they meet and exceed customer expectations.

- The service offering needs to be more consistent and reliable, ensuring that an overall perception is created within the minds of consumers. Attention needs to be given to the finer detail

in delivering quality service as these are the aspects that result in good service quality.

- Restaurant staff need to spend more time building "relationships" with their customers. This will assist in receiving regular feedback from customers in terms of the service quality. It helps to develop customer loyalty as customers enjoy personalised attention.

- Restaurants need to cater for the specific and unique needs of customers and not be indifferent to special requests. Restaurant staff need to be more creative in their service offerings as this is one of the few means available to them by which they can differentiate themselves from other similar competing restaurants. By "going the extra mile" might not deliver immediate financial returns, but they will certainly enjoy the benefits of such action in the long term. In this regard, adequate partitioning for smoking and non-smoking patrons should be given immediate attention.

- More communication needs to take place between all the personnel involved in delivering quality service to ensure proper coordination and completion of the service offering. This, together with regular feedback from customers, assist service providers in building relationships and keeping focus of the customers' ever increasing expectations and changing needs. The "flow of information" is important and it should not only be from management down to customers, but also vice versa.

- Quality standards need to be set to ensure that service quality programmes are constantly monitored. The format of the quality standard is to be set by all the personnel involved with delivering quality service.
- The Servqual model needs to be used more regularly to measure service quality, as the model can be an extremely valuable tool to assess customer perceptions and expectations. There is certainly room for minor modifications in terms of the applications of the model, but more research is needed in order to further develop the Servqual model.

6.6 POSSIBILITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Using the findings of this study a number of opportunities for future research have presented itself, namely:

- A study to determine the factors that are resulting in customer expectations being formulated.
- The perception of restaurant staff of their service quality offering compared to how the service quality was perceived by customers.
- A comparative study could be conducted assessing the differences in customer expectations, with regards to restaurant service using the various cultural groups of the local population in Cape Town as the criteria for drawing these comparisons.

- Comparative studies using the Servqual model by measuring service quality in similar service-oriented organisations.

ADDENDUM 3A

Addendum 3A illustrates the original Servqual model.

Directions: Based on your experiences as a consumer of _____ services, please think about the kind of _____ company that would deliver excellent quality of service. Think about the kind of _____ company with which you would be pleased to do business. Please show the extent to which you think such a _____ company would possess the feature described by each statement. If you feel a feature is *not at all essential* for excellent _____ companies such as the one you have in mind, circle the number. 1. If you feel a feature is *absolutely essential* for excellent _____ companies, circle 7. If your feelings are less strong, circle one of the numbers in the middle. There are no right or wrong answers - all we are interested in is a number that truly reflects your feelings regarding companies that would deliver excellent quality of service.

		Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree		
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1.	Excellent _____ companies will have modern-looking equipment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
2.	The physical facilities at excellent _____ companies will be visually appealing.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
3.	Employees at excellent _____ companies will be neat-appearing.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
4.	Materials associated with the service (such as pamphlets or statements) will be visually appealing in an excellent _____ company.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
5.	When excellent _____ companies promise to do something by a certain time, they will do so.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
6.	When a customer has a problem, excellent _____ companies will show a sincere interest in solving it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
7.	Excellent _____ companies will perform the service right the first time.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
8.	Excellent _____ companies will provide their services at the time they promise to do so.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
9.	Excellent _____ companies will insist on error-free records.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
10.	Employees in excellent _____ companies will tell customers exactly when services will be performed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
11.	Employees in excellent _____ companies will give prompt service to customers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

		Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree		
12.	Employees in excellent _____ companies will always be willing to help customers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
13.	Employees in excellent _____ companies will never be too busy to respond to customers' requests.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
14.	The behaviour of employees in excellent _____ companies will instill confidence in customers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
15.	Customers of excellent _____ companies will feel safe in their transactions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
16.	Employees in excellent _____ companies will be consistently courteous with customers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
17.	Employees in excellent _____ companies will have the knowledge to answer customers' questions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
18.	Excellent _____ companies will give customers individual attention.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
19.	Excellent _____ companies will have operating hours convenient to all their customers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
20.	Excellent _____ companies will have employees who give customers personal attention.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
21.	Excellent _____ companies will have the customers' best interest at heart.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
22.	The employees of excellent _____ companies will understand the specific needs of their customers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Directions: Listed below are five features pertaining to _____ companies and the services they offer. We would like to know how important each of these features is to you when you evaluate a _____ company's quality of service. Please allocate a total of 100 points among the five features according to how important each feature is to you - the more important a feature is to you, the more points you should allocate to it. Please ensure that the points you allocate to the five features add up to 100.

1. The appearance of the _____ company's physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials.	_____ points
2. The _____ company's ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.	_____ points
3. The _____ company's willingness to help customers and provide prompt service.	_____ points
4. The knowledge and courtesy of the _____ company's employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence.	_____ points
5. The caring, individualized attention the _____ company provides its customers.	_____ points
TOTAL points allocated	100 points
Which one feature among the above five is most important to you? (please enter the feature's number) _____	
Which feature is second most important to you? _____	
Which feature is least important to you? _____	

Directions: The following set of statements relate to your feelings about XYZ Company. For each statement, please show the extent to which you believe XYZ Company has the feature described by the statement. Once again, circling a 1 means that you strongly disagree that XYZ Company has that feature, and circling a 7 means that you strongly agree. You may circle any of the numbers in the middle that show how strong your feelings are. There are no right or wrong answers - all we are interested in is a number that best shows your perceptions about XYZ Company.

		Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	XYZ Co. has modern-looking equipment.							
2.	XYZ Co.'s physical facilities are visually appealing.							
3.	XYZ Co.'s employees are neat-appearing.							
4.	Materials associated with the service (such as pamphlets or statements) are visually appealing at XYZ Co.							
5.	When XYZ Co. promises to do something by a certain time, it does so.							
6.	When you have a problem, XYZ Co. shows a sincere interest in solving it.							
7.	XYZ Co. performs the service right the first time.							

		Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree		
8.	XYZ Co. provides its services at the time it promises to do so.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
9.	XYZ Co. insists on error-free records.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
10.	Employees in XYZ Co. tell you exactly when services will be performed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
11.	Employees in XYZ Co. give you prompt service.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
12.	Employees in XYZ Co. are always willing to help you.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
13.	Employees in XYZ Co. are never too busy to respond to your requests.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
14.	The behaviour of employees in XYZ Co. instills confidence in you.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
15.	You feel safe in your transactions with XYZ Co.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
16.	Employees in XYZ Co. are consistently courteous with you.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
17.	Employees in XYZ Co. have the knowledge to answer your questions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
18.	XYZ Co. gives you individual attention.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
19.	XYZ Co. has operating hours convenient to all its customers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
20.	XYZ Co. has employees who give you personal attention.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
21.	XYZ Co. has your best interests at heart.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
22.	Employees of XYZ Co. understand your specific needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

ADDENDUM 5A

QUESTIONNAIRE - RESTAURANTS

Section A: Your expectations of Restaurant Service

Directions: This section of the survey (Section A) deals with your EXPECTATIONS of restaurant services. Think about the restaurant at which you would enjoy your meals. Please indicate what are your expectations of the service that should be provided by restaurants. Do this by selecting one of the seven numbers next to each statement. If you STRONGLY AGREE that a restaurant should possess a feature, circle the number 7. If you STRONGLY DISAGREE that restaurants should possess a feature, circle the number 1. If your feelings are not particularly strong, circle the number 3. There are no right or wrong answers - I would greatly appreciate an honest answer by your selecting a number that best reflects YOUR expectations about the services of restaurants.

		Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	The physical facilities at excellent restaurants will be clean and visually appealing.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	The lighting, atmosphere and music of excellent restaurants are perfectly suited to its' image.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	Employees at excellent restaurants will have a neat appearance.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	Materials associated with the service (such as menus or statements) will be visually appealing in an excellent restaurant.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	Excellent restaurants make satisfactory arrangements for partitioning smoking and non-smoking sections.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	When excellent restaurants promise to do something by a certain time, they will do so.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	When a customer has a problem, excellent restaurants will show a sincere interest in solving it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	Excellent restaurants will perform the service right the first time.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.	Excellent restaurants provide service that is free of errors.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10.	Employees in excellent restaurant will tell customers exactly when services will be performed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

		Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree		
11.	Employees in excellent restaurants will give prompt service to customers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
12.	Employees in excellent restaurants will always be willing to help customers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
13.	The effort and care that was put into the preparation of your meal, dessert and beverages was superb.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
14.	The behaviour of employees in excellent restaurants will instill confidence in customers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
15.	Excellent restaurants allow you to spend as much time as you would like in their restaurants.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
16.	Employees in excellent restaurants will be consistently courteous with customers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
17.	Employees in excellent restaurants will have the knowledge to answer customers' questions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
18.	Excellent restaurants will give customers individual attention.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
19.	Excellent restaurants will have operating hours convenient to all their customers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
20.	Excellent restaurants do not place pressure on the customer by trying to "sell" them dishes and desserts on the menu.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
21.	Excellent restaurants always keep their the customers' best interest at heart.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
22.	The employees of excellent restaurants will understand the specific needs of their customers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

SECTION B

Directions: Listed below are five features pertaining to restaurants and the services that they offer. I would like to know how important each of these features are to *you* when you evaluate a restaurants' quality of service. Please allocate a total of 100 points among the five features *according to how important each feature is to you* - the more important a feature is to you, the more points you should allocate to it. Please ensure that the points you allocate to the five features add up to 100.

1.	The appearance of the restaurant's physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials.	_____	points
2.	The restaurant's ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.	_____	points
3.	The restaurant's willingness to help customers and provide prompt service.	_____	points
4.	The knowledge and courtesy of the restaurant's employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence.	_____	points
5.	The caring, individualized attention the restaurant provides its customers.	_____	points
TOTAL points allocated			100 points

SECTION C

Directions: The following set of statements relate to your feelings about **this restaurant**. For each statement, please show the extent to which you believe **this restaurant** has the feature described by the statement. Once again, circling a 1 means that you strongly disagree that **this restaurant** has that feature, and circling a 7 means that you strongly agree. You may circle any of the numbers in the middle that show how strong your feelings are. There are no right or wrong answers - all we are interested in is a number that best shows your perceptions about **this restaurant**.

		Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	This restaurants' physical facilities are visually appealing.							
2.	The lighting, atmosphere and music of this restaurant are perfectly suited to its appeal.							
3.	This restaurants' employees have a neat-appearance.							
4.	Materials associated with the service (such as menus or statements) are visually appealing in this restaurant.							
5.	This restaurant makes excellent arrangements for partitioning smoking and non-smoking areas.							
6.	When this restaurant promises to do something by a certain time, it does so.							
7.	When you have a problem, this restaurant shows a sincere interest in solving it.							
8.	This restaurant performs the service right the first time.							

		Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.	This restaurant has provided service that is error-free.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10.	Employees in this restaurant told you exactly when services will be performed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11.	Employees in this restaurant gave you prompt service.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12.	Employees in this restaurant were always willing to help you.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13.	The effort and care that was put into the preparation of your meal, dessert and beverages of this restaurant was superb.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14.	The behaviour of employees in this restaurant instilled confidence in you.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15.	This restaurant allowed you to spend as much time in their restaurant as you would have liked.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16.	Employees in this restaurant were consistently courteous with you.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17.	Employees in this restaurant had the knowledge to answer your questions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18.	This restaurant staff gave you individual attention.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19.	This restaurant has operating hours convenient to all its customers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20.	This restaurant's staff never places you under any pressure to buy specials on the menu.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21.	This restaurant has your best interests at heart.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22.	Employees of this restaurant understood your specific needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Thank you for your time, it is greatly appreciated.

TERENCE HERMANUS

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