

**The Influence of Customer Service on Consumer Buying Behaviour at selected  
supermarkets in the greater Durban area.**

**By**

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## **DECLARATION**

**I TINASHE MUSASA do hereby declare that this study is merely my own work apart where indicated and all work has been compiled under the supervision of the aforementioned DUT supervisors. Information acquired from other authors has been referenced accordingly.**

*'For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end' (Jeremiah 29:11).*

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## ABSTRACT

Customer service has been identified as a crucial aspect of the retail mix that can pose great significance in the creation of a store image. The modern retail sector has become highly competitive, with consumers demanding exceptional service that surpasses the expectations of service such that, comprehensive service strategies remain crucial for retailers to succeed (Timm, 2008:110). Furthermore, the increasing sameness of merchandise among supermarkets has induced retail giants in South Africa to rely on offering high quality service to remain competitive and build some source of differentiation (Beneke et al., 2012:173). Comprehensive service strategies are a requirement for retailers to remain competitive as they positively influence consumer perception of service that ultimately creates a store image (Harris 2010:17). Failure of service delivered to meet or exceed consumer expectation results in negative perception among consumers and customers end up deserting that particular retailer in search of better service elsewhere (Johnston and Marshall 2010:173).

The main aim of this study was to determine the influence of customer service on consumer buying behaviour at selected supermarkets within the greater Durban area. To accomplish the objectives of this study, a quantitative study was conducted in the form of a descriptive survey. A sample of 400 respondents was questioned. Self-administered questionnaires were distributed amongst participants. Non-probability sampling was used in selecting respondents in the greater Durban area. Reviewed literature and findings of the study made the basis for conclusions and recommendations of this study.

Results of this study indicate the following:

- There is a positive perception towards service delivery in most Durban supermarkets and the majority of respondents indicated their willingness to continue visiting specific stores and recommend them to others.
- There is a relationship between customer service and consumer buying behaviour.

It is therefore recommended that supermarket management continue to uphold service quality as it not only ensures customer retention but also generates positive attitudes towards the stores.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### ORIENTATION

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Intense competition in the retail industry compels retail giants to constantly seek major sources of creating sustainable competitive advantage, as a result of consumers expecting a unique service. In a supermarket context, customer service remains a reliable source of creating sustainable advantage, considering the increased sameness of merchandise in these settings (Beneke et al 2012:27). Instead of viewing consumer complaints in buying situations as negative responses, retailers should consider it as an opportunity to enhance service quality and ensure both customer satisfaction and retention (Ashraf, Sajjad and Rizwan 2013:122). This study seeks to determine the influence of customer service on consumer buying behaviour in the greater Durban area. This study explores key aspects of customer service and models that explain modern behaviour of consumers. It attempts at developing a relationship that exist between customer service and consumer buying behaviour. Key premises in determining consumer behaviour in this study are achieved through understanding consumer perceptions of service quality through their most recent experiences in a supermarket. Key concepts focused on in this study include customer service, consumer buying behaviour and supermarket, which will be briefly explained.

#### 1.2 DEFINITION OF CORE CONCEPTS

It is imperative that core concepts of this study are defined to facilitate better comprehension of what this study will cover. Customer service, consumer behaviour, supermarket and customer service quality are defined within the context of marketing and retail for the purpose of this study.

**Customer service** points out the efforts of retailers in developing a conducive shopping experience for consumers through integrating and providing a group of activities or programmes (Harris 2010:2). Generally, these programmes indirectly improve the total value of product/service consumers buy in a particular store. Likewise, Ward (2014:3) defines customer service as an organisation's ability to satisfy the needs and wants of its consumers. Nevertheless, this meaning lacks the transactional explanation of customer service. An understanding of customer service

merely founded on the retailer's ability to satisfy consumer needs is inadequate. A proper meaning of customer service should comprise efficiently satisfying consumer needs by providing specialist, constructive, top notch service that is delivered as needs arise (McKinney 2015:1).

**Consumer behaviour** involves a process of seeking for, acquiring, using, appraising, and disposing of products and services expected to satisfy needs (Schiffman and Wisenblit 2015:30). Similarly, Furaji, Latuszynska and Wawrzyniak (2012:76) view consumer buying behaviour as a psychological process that involves identifying a need, discovering options of satisfying the need, purchase decision making, deducing information, making plans and applying these plans. In essence, it can be deemed that consumers are rational decision makers who only follow what satisfies their personal interests.

**Supermarkets** refer to fairly large retail stores that often operate on a self-service system and offers food and other household items. These stores have a proper arrangement of products within a single setting that include food, drinks, utensils and clothes in some instances (Borraz et al. 2013:79).

**Customer service quality** has been defined by Theron, Bothma and du Toit (2003:93) as the overall impression customers develop about a particular retail outlet's customer service. Ganesan-Lim, Russell-Bennett and Dager (2008 cited by Lotz 2009:11) advocate that perceived service quality explains a customer's appraisal of, or impression about a store's general superiority. Basically, service quality can be viewed as an assessment of how well service rendered meets expectations of consumers. To better understand the purpose of this study, it is beneficial to reflect on how customer service has evolved in relation to consumer buying behaviour.

### **1.3 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Customer service in the retail sector has developed remarkably over the course of time. However, the object of service offering in each store setting has remained unchanged despite the passing time. The focus has been mainly on retaining customers for as long as possible to boost sales, keeping in mind that it costs more than twice the amount to draw a new customer than keep an old one (Ahmed, Rahman and Rahman 2009:23).

It can be traced back to the 1700s when customer loyalty programmes in retail service packages were introduced. These were aimed at constructing relationships between sellers and buyers. By the 1800s, consumers still had to travel to respective stores to receive assistance despite the invention of telephones and switchboards during this era. The 1900s marked the introduction of call centres to generate convenience of buyers in accessing sellers. All these changes were efforts by organisations to restructure customer service to better reach consumers, stay in contact with them and retain them. The 1900s brought the World Wide Web marking a new era for both consumers and sellers in which the world was presented to the Internet. Emailing, live chatting, online shopping and today's social media support have now become part and parcel of service offered by retail giants to remain competitive. In South Africa currently the likes of Kalahari.com and Zando have successfully brought convenience and fast service to online shoppers and remain in touch with changing times (Holmes 2014:4).

The most notable change in the evolution of customer service was when retailers diverted their focus toward preserving constructive and enduring relations with consumers. In addition, they promoted building loyalty of consumers. This change demonstrated a clear shift towards customer based service strategies (Bateson and Hoffman 2011:380).

Consumer behaviour has been playing an integral role in the alteration of customer service. Consumers have been passive but have become much vocal lately and open to express their feelings towards service offered at retail outlets (Madupalli and Poddar 2014:244). Consumers, based on their expectations, have become increasingly demanding as they have become more aware of their rights and their increasing need for value for money. Schiffman and Wisenblit (2015:87) further insinuate that fully satisfying one's need is impossible because as goals are achieved new ones develop. To successfully manage this demanding nature of consumers, retailers have to frequently alter their service packages (Tlapana 2009:4).

It is imperative that an in-depth research is conducted to understand the ever-changing behaviour of consumers, so that retailers can provide tailor made service strategies that satisfy consumers' current expectations. The opportunity to succeed is available for proactive retail firms to manipulate, provided they are fully aware of the needs of their customers and are able to provide added services. These can be achieved by

following a continuous process of analysing behaviour of consumers towards service offered and implement required changes immediately.

#### **1.4 RESEARCH PROBLEM**

In spite of a number of publications and academic research conducted on customer service and consumer buying performance; uncertainties are still at large on how service rendered at retail outlets influences purchasing behaviour of consumers. Similarly, Steinhoff and Palmatier (2014:1) substantiate that loyalty programs, as part of customer service still lack clarity regarding their effectiveness that is; how consumers respond to their implementation despite researchers supporting their usefulness.

Nowadays, consumers have become hyper-sensitive than before when retailers tended to dictate their service offering to customers. Consumers now demand prompt and welcoming service that is up to their standards whenever they visit a particular retail outlet. In cases where consumers do not receive this fast and friendly service, they resort to switching behaviour in which they seek outlets offering service up to their expectations (Tlapana 2009:4).

Harris (2007:15) states that it is becoming increasingly challenging for retailers to determine consumer behaviour towards service delivery, as consumers are now sophisticated. Their tastes and preferences are ever-changing as time passes. Consequently, it is imperative that retail outlets constantly assess and reorganise their service strategies to act in accordance with fluctuating consumer behaviour (Blythe 2009:73).

Delays in service restructuring can become costly for the retailer. These delays in redressing service packages to meet changing tastes and preferences of consumers, result in lost sales as consumers seek better service elsewhere (Beard 2013:2). For this reason, Bateson and Hoffman (2011:389) support that customer retention is important for companies to remain profitable and avoid the continuous cycle of seeking new customers.

It can be summed up that a strong service strategy is one that recognises customers' expectations and exceeds them (Beard 2013:2). This perspective reveals how



competitive the retail sector has become. It is imperative that consumers' perceptions be unveiled to reveal the influence of customer service on consumer buying behaviour. Uncovering the perceptions of the consumer will help retail outlets to realign their service delivery strategies and assist retailers in retaining customers through improved service delivery. This research study will add to the body of knowledge of this discipline and aid retail outlets to restructure their service strategies based on the findings.

### **1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The main aim of this study is to determine the influence of customer service on consumer buying behaviour at selected supermarkets in the greater Durban area. From this aim, the following objectives were developed:

- To determine the relationship between customer service and consumer buying behaviour;
- To ascertain customer perception on service quality that would influence consumer buying behaviour;
- To understand customer experiences and how they influence the consumer buying behaviour;
- To determine ways of enhancing customer service that will positively impact on the consumer buying behaviour.

### **1.6 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Research methodology in this study entails various methods, techniques or procedures used in applying the research design (Babbie and Mouton 2001:647). An appropriate research methodology was used in this study based on literature and objectives of this study. The measuring tool (i.e. questionnaire) for this study was developed based on existing and empirically tested scales for measuring service quality. The research methods implemented in this study will be briefly explained in the following sections of this chapter.

### **1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study was in the form of a descriptive, cross-sectional design in which consumers were surveyed in Durban to unveil their perceptions and experience towards service delivered at supermarkets in Durban. This approach was considered appropriate as it facilitates evaluation of a trend in an area and understanding of the distribution of each

variable across survey respondents (Punch 2009:277). Self-administered questionnaires were utilised in collecting data. Completed questionnaires were encoded into a statistical package called SPSS version 22.

### **1.8 SAMPLING**

The sample size envisaged for this study was 400 participants within the greater Durban area. Lategan, Lues and Nel (2011:35) recommend a reasonable sample within the range of 30 to 500 participants to facilitate generalisation of findings. Similarly, Boyce (2002:261) argues that a sample of 300 is large enough to make inferences for the larger population in a situation whereby almost all respondents are eligible for the purpose of the study. Convenience sampling was used for this study as participants were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate in this study.

### **1.9 DATA COLLECTION**

Questionnaires were used in collecting data from 400 respondents. These questionnaires were designed to collect consumer information regarding their demographics, perception of service and past experience at a supermarket. Graduate assistants were used by the researcher in collecting data.

Respondents were randomly approached at their households and through use of mall intercepts, as the researcher understands that respondents are more likely to offer useful information when they are close to the environment in question. In addition, mall intercepts accommodate large samples at lower costs and enable easier administration of questionnaires (Zikmund 2000:220). Completion of questionnaires required an average of 5-10 minutes. Respondents were informed of the purpose of this study and that their participation was voluntary.

### **1.10 DATA ANALYSIS**

Descriptive statistics were used, accompanied with graphs, tables, charts and inferential statistics to make inferences about the population based on findings. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 was utilised in analysing data.

### **1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethical issues have highly become known among researchers yet, there are still possibilities of infringing participants' rights. Bless, Smith and Kagee (2007:139) emphasise that a significant number of researchers may be well-intentioned and honest in conducting research however, the possibility of violating rights of respondents is always present whether the researcher is conscious or not. De Vos et al., (2011:113) mention that with people being objects of study in social sciences, ethical challenges are inevitable than in purely scientific settings. Each potential participant has the right to choose whether or not to participate in a study, privacy and safety from any physical or psychological damage. In an attempt to observe ethical concerns, precautionary measures utilised in this study will be discussed.

Participation in this study was voluntary and prospective participants were informed of the purpose of the study. Despite observing ethical requirements, voluntary participation increased the researcher's probability of collecting honest responses. Participants were also free to return blank questionnaires in case they decided not to be part of the survey.

It was important that accurate and honest responses were collected for this research. However, this could not be achieved if information provided by respondents was not kept anonymous and confidential. In addition, it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that security and self-worth of participation are protected. Identity of participants will not be divulged, no participant was required to fill in any form of identity information. To ensure responses were confidential, sealed boxes were used to drop questionnaires and data aggregated. A research report will be made available to the Durban University of Technology's Library with the study and its findings.

### **1.12 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

Validity entails accuracy of the research instrument to measure exactly what it is supposed to measure (Kumar 2011:177). Objectives of this study guided development of questions used in the questionnaire. Questions previously used in empirically proven studies were used in this study's questionnaire development. In addition, a pilot test was conducted to further improve questionnaire content and structure.

Reliability revolves around consistency of a research instrument to produce similar results on repeated scenarios (Leedy and Omrod 2010:93). A sample size of 400 was

considered large enough to produce credible findings and generalisation thereof for this study. Furthermore, questionnaires were uniform and instructions clearly stated on each of them to ensure better comprehension among respondents.

### **1.13 RATIONALE OF STUDY**

It has been emphasised how challenging it has become for retailers to determine their level of service to consumers in a world whereby behaviour of consumers is frequently changing. Despite this challenge, retailers cannot afford the cost of losing a customer and of gaining a new one (Harris 2007:15). A clear perspective of how consumers behave in today's markets remains crucial in marketing and retail operations to take advantage of opportunities and create sustainable competitive advantage (Kamwendo 2014:11). This study will unveil consumer perceptions and by doing so retailers can realign their service approaches to meet current consumer requirements and remain competitive. Furthermore, this study will add to the still growing body of knowledge related to marketing and retail.

### **1.14 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

This study focuses on behaviour of consumers in buying situations at supermarkets within South Africa with the objective of developing the influence of customer service on consumer buying behaviour. This study investigates consumer perception on service quality and their most recent experience with customer service that would influence buying behaviour within the greater Durban area.

### **1.15 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study is limited to the following concepts: customer service and consumer buying behaviour. This study was also restricted to supermarkets within the city of Durban and only consumers visiting these outlets and residing in Durban were considered. The study excluded minors (i.e. consumers below the age of 18). Focus is on consumer perception of service quality and their most recent experience of customer service at a supermarket in Durban that influence buying behaviour (consumer behaviour).

### **1.16 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Convenience, time and budget constraints limited this study to supermarkets in Durban. The issue of English as a second language amongst respondents was likely

to pose difficulties in data collection however, some graduate research assistants selected were good IsiZulu speakers. Since participation was voluntary, some participants opted out of the survey making it challenging to meet the required sample size within a short time. Review of literature was limited to concepts of customer service and consumer behaviour for the purpose of this study. Findings of this study described service quality at supermarkets in Durban and consumer behaviour in response to service delivered such that, generalisation of these findings to other retail formats like general merchandise retailers (departmental stores, full-line discount stores, specialty stores or off-price retailers) and some food retailers (hypermarkets, combination store, supercentres or convenience stores) would be inappropriate.

## **1.17 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS**

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This chapter will be the introduction to the research study. It will cover the background/context of the study, problem statement, aims and objectives of the research, rationale of the study, research methodology and limitations of the study.

### **Chapter 2: Literature review**

Literature relevant to the variables of this research study i.e. customer service and consumer buying behaviour will be reviewed in this chapter to answer the research problem. The chapter will also serve as the theoretical framework of the research.

### **Chapter 3: Research methodology**

Approaches utilised to conduct this research, to collect and analyse data will be presented in this chapter.

### **Chapter 4: Presentation of data and analysis**

Data will be presented and analysed through use of statistics in this chapter to make it meaningful to the reader.

### **Chapter 5: Recommendations and conclusion**

Recommendations will be made in this chapter based on findings of chapter 2 and 4. Conclusions will be also drawn based on findings.

## **1.18 CONCLUSION**

Chapter one served as the introduction for this study, and provided a pattern in which this research will follow. The background of this study emphasised the importance of conducting this survey. In light of the ever changing behaviour of modern consumers, this study will aid South African retailers in realigning their service packages to meet current consumer requirements and remain competitive. Aims of this study were stated and these will direct the entire survey in ensuring they are achieved. The following chapter reviews literature by exploring pertinent aspects of customer service and crucial antecedents that determine consumer behaviour.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter aims at providing in-depth and integrated information relating to the primary variables of this study. These are identified as customer service and consumer buying behaviour. The main purpose of this literature review is to go beyond a mere exploration of information but to present current, relevant information to enhance this research. In addition, this review of literature will provide a theoretical framework which underpins this study. Heppell (2010:4) emphasises that a retail outlet which aims to achieve its goal; who wants to be recognised and gain loyalty of consumers; should reflect a five star service approach which has become crucial nowadays.

This chapter will explore the relationship between customer service and customer buying behaviour. The role of expectations and perceptions of customer buying behaviour will be examined to determine its importance in establishing customer service quality. This study will visit two different approaches to customer service which are customised and standardised approaches. A look into these approaches will provide a context as to how supermarkets or retailers adhere to customer needs which are tailored to the customer. Service quality is examined extensively in this study as it forms the basis of customer behaviour and customer service.

#### **2.2 RELATING CUSTOMER SERVICE AND CUSTOMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR**

Customer service points out the efforts of retailers in developing a conducive shopping experience for consumers through integrating and providing a group of activities or programmes (Harris 2010:2). Generally, these programmes indirectly improve the total value of product/service consumers buy in a particular store. Likewise, Ward (2014:3) states that customer service refers to an organisation's ability to satisfy the needs and wants of its consumers nevertheless, this meaning lacks the transactional explanation of customer service. An understanding of customer service founded on the retailer's ability to satisfy consumer needs is inadequate. A proper meaning of customer service should comprise efficiently satisfying consumer needs through providing specialist, constructive, top notch service that is delivered as needs arise (Thomas and Tobe 2013:9).

According to Schiffman and Wisenblit (2015:30) consumer behaviour involves a process of seeking for, acquiring, using, appraising, and disposing of products and services expected to satisfy needs. Similarly, Furaji, Latuszynska and Wawrzyniak (2012:76) view consumer buying behaviour as a psychological process that involves identifying a need, discovering options of satisfying the need, purchase decision making, deducing information, making plans and applying these plans. Therefore, based on the above definitions, it can be deemed that consumers are rational decision makers who only follow what satisfies their personal interests. After service delivery, consumers develop perceptions which they use against their expectations of service to determine level of service delivered (Levy and Weitz 2012:504).

### **2.3 ROLE OF EXPECTATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS IN CUSTOMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR**

Expectations and perceptions of consumers play a significant role in evaluating service quality at retail stores. It is therefore important for retailers to adequately understand these two, so that relevant adjustments can be implemented to service in order to satisfy consumer needs. Perception refers to an individual's effort in selecting, organising and comprehending stimuli into a meaningful picture (Schiffman, Kanuk and Wisenblit 2010:175). Likewise Jain, Sethi and Mukheji (2009:56) acknowledge that consumers are exposed to various information, ideas and experiences which they utilise consciously or not to understand certain stimuli and make decisions. It can be deduced that customer perception is a subjective matter that occurs soon after service delivery or even during the process. Lotz (2009:25) supports that every individual has different ways of perceiving things despite having a similar experience as others.

In contrast, expectations are solely grounded on consumers' understanding and experience. Ziethaml, Beitner and Gremler (2013:51) view expectations as customer beliefs, which they utilise in evaluating service performance. Furthermore, Levy and Weitz (2012:504) highlight that consumers are pleased with service if their perception of service surpasses or equals their expectation and when the opposite happens consumers are displeased.

Supermarkets should ensure that their service strategies are customised to meet expectations of customers. Harris (2010:17) distinguishes expectations into two forms namely primary and secondary expectations. Primary expectations entail essential



prerequisites of customers from services delivered. On the other hand, secondary expectations are entirely based on previous experience with services that aid on improving primary expectations. For instance, a customer in a supermarket expects to find a product at a specific price range (primary expectation) conversely, the customer expects store personnel to be polite based on his/her previous experience (secondary expectation).

Expectations of customers are volatile and each customer has a distinctive set of expectations. This presents a significant challenge for retailers on how to organise their service strategies. On a positive note, changes in expectations of customers give supermarkets a platform to tailor their service to meet customer requirements and remain competitive (Harris 2010:18). Although customers use perceptions and expectations to assess service performance; accurate evaluation of service performance is difficult due to the intangibility of customer service (Sandhu and Bala 2011:220). Retailers utilise two main approaches in delivering service to consumers these will be discussed below.

#### **2.4 APPROACHES TO CUSTOMER SERVICE: CUSTOMISED AND STANDARDISED APPROACHES**

Two broad forms of service are provided in a retail setting to satisfy the different types of needs of customers; these are customised and standardised approaches to service. Levy and Weitz (2012:501) suggest that a customised approach to delivering service involves organising service to meet individual needs of customers whilst standardised approaches adhere to a specific group of rules or store policies for executing customer service such that all customers are offered a uniform set of service activities. Furthermore, Singh (2011:561) suggests that customised approaches emphasise that a customer is priceless and plays a significant part in influencing the retailer's success; whereas standardised approaches ensure uniformity of service by facilitating a similar service experience among all customers in terms of quality, taste and feel.

Customisation of service promotes uniqueness and superiority of customer service. Hyken (2013:2) concurs that personalised service promotes customer retention due to the intimate touch or feel related to this approach. However, a major shortcoming of customisation is inconsistency when delivering service attributed to different personalities of individuals handling service encounters. Different people have their

own unique capabilities and mood swings that can affect the level of consistency required when delivering a service. On the other hand, standardisation facilitates consistency and time saving in delivering service due to its strong adherence to store rules and regulations.

Levy and Weitz (2012:502) posit that store personnel follow strict procedures under a standardised approach which aids in making the process of service delivery consistent and timeous. For example, KFC provides a uniform level of food quality and follow same routines of service like greetings and taking orders across all its outlets in South Africa based on standardised approaches when rendering service to consumers.

## **2.5 THE COST OF PROVIDING SERVICE**

While high quality service is vital for retailer's growth and competitive edge, cautious assessment of the service cost is imperative before implementing a service strategy. Customised high quality service approaches often require higher investments of resources. Use of cost-benefit analysis could be helpful in evaluating costs and benefits of delivering a particular level of service. If costs outweigh benefits then it is important to discontinue that particular service approach (Levy and Weitz 2012:503).

When deciding which service approach to pursue, decisions should not be entirely based on cost of rendering service. Situations in which a service approach contributes a large portion of the firm's overall costs, benefits drawn from such an approach should also be considered (Aten 2011:3). If a project's overall benefit does not outweigh its costs then it is not commendable to conduct it (Aten 2011:3). For instance, a store manager might not be sure whether or not to increase the amount of store personnel to improve service speed which results in increased labour cost. Tschol (2013:5) encourages the notion of improving speed of service, implying that due to intense competition in the retail area and customers' pressed time for shopping; quick delivery of service is vital to satisfy consumers and remain competitive. For example, today Dell is now a major computer manufacturing and retail business globally through its efforts of delivering custom-made computers within 4 hours.

## **2.6 CUSTOMER SERVICE QUALITY**

Service quality has been defined by Theron, Bothma and du Toit (2003:93) as the overall impression customers develop about a particular retail outlet's customer service. Basically, service quality can be viewed as an assessment of how well service

rendered meets expectations of consumers. According to Lotz (2009:12) perceived service quality can be described as the customer's overall evaluation of, or idea about a firm's general brilliance. An organisation's viewpoint of service quality explains it as the ability to meet prerequisites or specifications (Futrell 2014:52). For supermarkets to retain customers they need to deliver exceptional service.

## **2.7 MEASURING SERVICE QUALITY**

The retail sector has become highly competitive, with customers demanding exceptional service that surpasses their expectations of service. The increasing sameness of merchandise among supermarkets has induced giant supermarkets like Pick and Pay, Spar, Shoprite, Woolworths and Checkers to rely on offering high quality service to remain competitive and build some source of differentiation. The ultimate objective will be to uphold customer satisfaction (Beneke et al., 2012:27).

It is understood that quality is a crucial aspect of customer service that will assist consumers in differentiating one service encounter from another as well as competing ones. Contrary to tangible goods, service itself is difficult to test quality moreover, evaluation of service often occurs after it has been consumed. Literature advocates that rendering of high quality service is crucial in ensuring sustainable profits, customer loyalty and positive word of mouth among consumers (Terblanche et al., 2013:265).

A number of models have been proposed and remodelled by researchers to aid in our understanding of service quality and its management. One of the objectives of this research study is to determine ways of improving customer service therefore, it is important to review some of the important models of service quality. Quality by definition expands across a number of dimensions, therefore product or service quality cannot be ensured without ascertaining salient elements of quality. Generic determinants of service quality have been identified and frequently mentioned in literature which will be discussed.

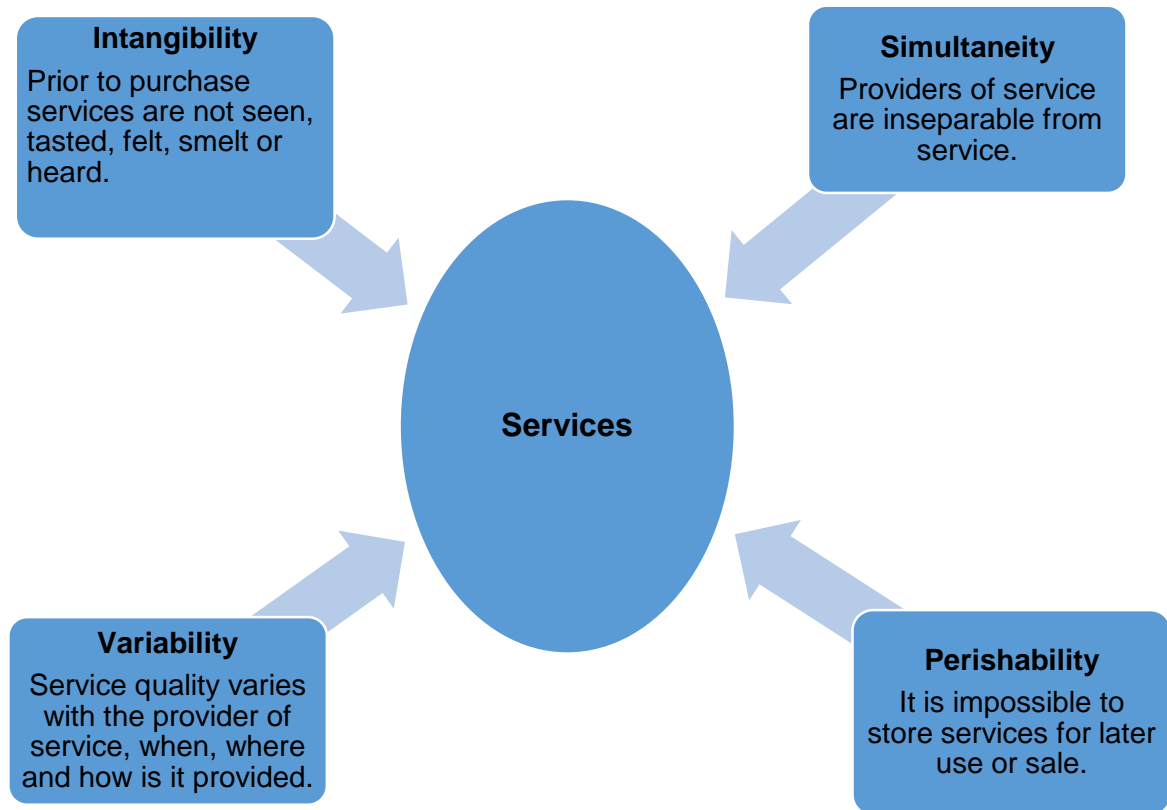
Literature strongly recommends retailers to enhance service quality and gain competitive advantage in today's aggressive market environment (Sandhu and Bala 2011:219). A critical evaluation of service quality ensures supermarkets' sustainability and growth. However, measurement of service quality remains an elusive aspect such that a number of models have been designed and remodelled to achieve accuracy in

measurement (Sandhu and Bala 2011:220). A better understanding of service quality and its measurement can be achieved by first reviewing the main characteristics of customer service in general. According to Woo and Ennew (2005:1180) a clear comprehension of service is facilitated by differentiating customer service from consumer products. By doing so, the authors postulate that characteristics of service can be identified.

## **2.8 CHARACTERISTICS OF CUSTOMER SERVICE QUALITY**

Armstrong and Kotler (2013:236) propose that though service is a 'product' overall, it has unique features and marketing requirements. The most notable difference is that service is intangible and is generated from interacting with consumers. General Service at supermarkets comprises of four characteristics which are intangibility, perishability, simultaneity and variability. These features present new and distinct challenges for retailers when providing service (du Plessis et al., 2012:312). Retailers have to find ways of addressing these challenges to entice new customers and retain current ones.

Figure 2.1 illustrates four different characteristics of customer service quality that present challenges to retailers to deal with and briefly explains the meaning of each.



**FIGURE 2.1: Characteristics of Customer Service Quality**

Source: Armstrong and Kotler (2013:236)

### **2.8.1 Intangibility**

Du Plessis et al. (2012:312) describe intangibility of service as something that is impossible to touch, smell or see such that explaining, understanding or demonstrating this phenomenon is difficult. Similarly, Lovelock and Wirtz (2011:41) believe service intangibility means 'palpable' and 'mental' intangibility. Based on the former the customer can not physically touch a service and the latter the customer finds it difficult to mentally comprehend service. In an effort to minimise uncertainty associated with service, customers often base their evaluation of service quality on other people, place, equipment or communication received from providers of service (Armstrong and Kotler 2013:237).

Customers find it challenging to conclude technical quality of service that they resort to assessing tangibles in form of physical facilities like ATMs, restrooms or store layout (Genesan-Lim, Russell-Bunnet and Dagger 2008:554). Supermarkets should ensure a high level of appearance for their in-store physical facilities and guarantee ease of access for customers through offering conducive store layouts and parking space (Terblanche et al., 2013:270). In addition, consumers because of intangibility of service they use other people's previous experiences and knowledge to evaluate service (Armstrong and Kotler 2013:237). It is imperative that supermarkets maintain a superior image of service such that word of mouth spreads favourably for them.

### **2.8.2 Simultaneity**

Armstrong and Kotler (2013:237) suggest that service and providers thereof cannot be separated and it does not matter if providers are people or machines. Furthermore, once a store employee starts delivering service he/she becomes part of service. Similarly, consumers of service cannot be separated from it rather they actively play a significant role in its delivery. In general, unlike consumer goods, customer service cannot be manufactured for later consumption (Boshoff 2014:39).

Likewise, du Plessis et al. (2012:313) reinforce that service delivery cannot be split from the person providing it. In addition, due to inseparability of service its trading area is limited such that customers have to physically visit a specific supermarket to get service. For instance after a customer buys stale meat from supermarket, he/she has to be physically present at the store to facilitate any exchange or refund. It might be challenging to get customers present in some instances however, the internet has become a viable alternative for dealing with such issues for retailers.

As mentioned, both parties (service provider and consumer) are actively involved in service delivery this highlights the role of humans in service transactions. People are prone to errors and bring high levels variability with them in delivering service, therefore service failure or shortfalls in terms of quality service are frequent with retailers (Terblanche et al., 2013:270).

### **2.8.3 Variability**

Variability is a main feature of customer service that explains changes in quality of service delivered depending on who provides it, when, where and how it is provided (Armstrong and Kotler 2013:238). For instance giant supermarkets like Pick and Pay and Spar are associated with providing better service, it is highly possible to find one store employee cheerful yet another in the same store is unpleasant. Lotz (2009:16) explains that service performance is erratic making it difficult for retailers to standardise service. It is so due to human interaction when delivering service as people bring high levels of variability. Equally, Bateson and Hoffman (2011:68) describe variability as a unique service characteristic that indicates inconsistencies associated with one service transaction to the other.

Service encounters often occur in real time with a customer physically present, if disruptions occur it becomes all most impossible to implement quality control measures before a customer receives that service. From this it becomes clear that achieving perfect quality continuously in delivering service is impossible. Strategies to rectify service failure cannot always be clear cut, neither a store manager can always anticipate that one of the employees might react angrily to a customer or forget where a product is located (Boshoff 2014:39).

Bateson and Hoffman (2011:68) further suggest that variability not only presents inconsistencies of service from one company to another or within employees of a particular firm, nevertheless it shows variations of service performance from the same service provider on a daily basis. For example a store employee might be identified as cheerful however, due to mood swings and tiredness later during the day he/she might become unpleasant in handling service encounters.

Despite the challenges posed by variability of service, Bateson and Hoffman (2011:69) propose completely opposite solutions to these challenges. Providing customised service can be a solution for supermarkets to handle variability in service. On the other hand a standardised approach to service can also solve these challenges. The former Levy and Weitz (2012:501) describes it as a service approach of providing tailor made service to meet the needs of consumers. In contrast, standardisation entails

systematising the service approach such that every consumer receives almost the same type and level of service (Terblanche et al., 2013:268).

#### **2.8.4 Perishability**

Perishability of service means that service cannot be stored for future use unlike consumer goods. In other words, idle service today cannot be inventoried to satisfy peak periods in the future (Armstrong and Kotler 2013:237). Bruhn and Georgi (2006:14) suggest that the extent of perishability of service is influenced by the level of intangibility. The aspect of perishability in service compels store personnel to provide proper service on the first encounter on an ongoing basis. Moreover, it makes it impossible to implement quality tests before service is delivered to customers. Lovelock and Wirtz (2011:16) advocate that services are ephemeral and cannot be stocked however, they point out that there are exceptions when service activities are recorded for future use in print or electronic format.

Perishability as an aspect of service presents challenges for supermarkets when demand is fluctuating. It is highly challenging for supermarkets to balance demand and supply of service. In fact, perfectly matching supply with demand is only by chance because of the fluctuating nature of consumer demand for services (Armstrong and Kotler 2013:246).

Nonetheless, Bateson and Hoffman (2011:72) propose a number of measures to smooth out demand and supply issues. In cases where demand exceeds supply of service especially during peak hours customers become dissatisfied because of increased waiting periods. In such cases creative pricing in form of 'early bird specials' help in shifting consumer demand patterns to non-peak periods as they seek saving costs. Non-peak demand development approach can be used to train service providers before peak periods or to provide service to a different market segment with different demand patterns.

On the other hand, to handle supply issues supermarkets have successfully made use of part time staff which also lowers labour costs although consumers might end up associating part time staff with lower job skills and commitment leading to dissatisfaction. In addition, supermarkets can utilise third parties or consumer participation to optimise supply capacity (Bateson and Hoffman 2011:76). For



instance, supermarkets like Pick and Pay and Spar to provide a consistently clean shopping environment for consumers they subcontract service. Shoppers in Spar outlets are provided with barcode scanning devices that show prices of products in case they are not clearly displayed on shelves.

A better comprehension of service quality now can be achieved since relevant aspects that make up customer service have been identified. However, measurement of service quality as mentioned earlier remains a challenging endeavour (Sandhu and Bala 2011:220). Relevant models for measuring quality of service will be later discussed, with a conclusion of which model will be utilised in this research project appropriate in the retail sector. In the following segment, the importance of service quality will be discussed.

## **2.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF SERVICE QUALITY IN DELIVERING SERVICE**

Customer service approaches that address both service quality and customer satisfaction are a concrete definition of what effective and efficient service is to the retailer. According to Zeithaml et al. (1990 cited by Dewan and Mahajan 2014:45) service quality pertains to the customer's overall impression of the relative pre-eminence or inferiority of service or provider thereof. In essence, service quality entails the extent to which service rendered meets or exceeds expectation of customers.

In its simplest form, one of the objectives of service quality is to ensure customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction explains the customer's general feeling of contentment with a service encounter. In addition, it acknowledges the difference between customer expectations and perceptions (Harris 2013:3). In general, satisfaction in this context refers to the end result of distinct service encounters irrespective of the communication means utilised (face to face conversations, written, telephone based or technology).

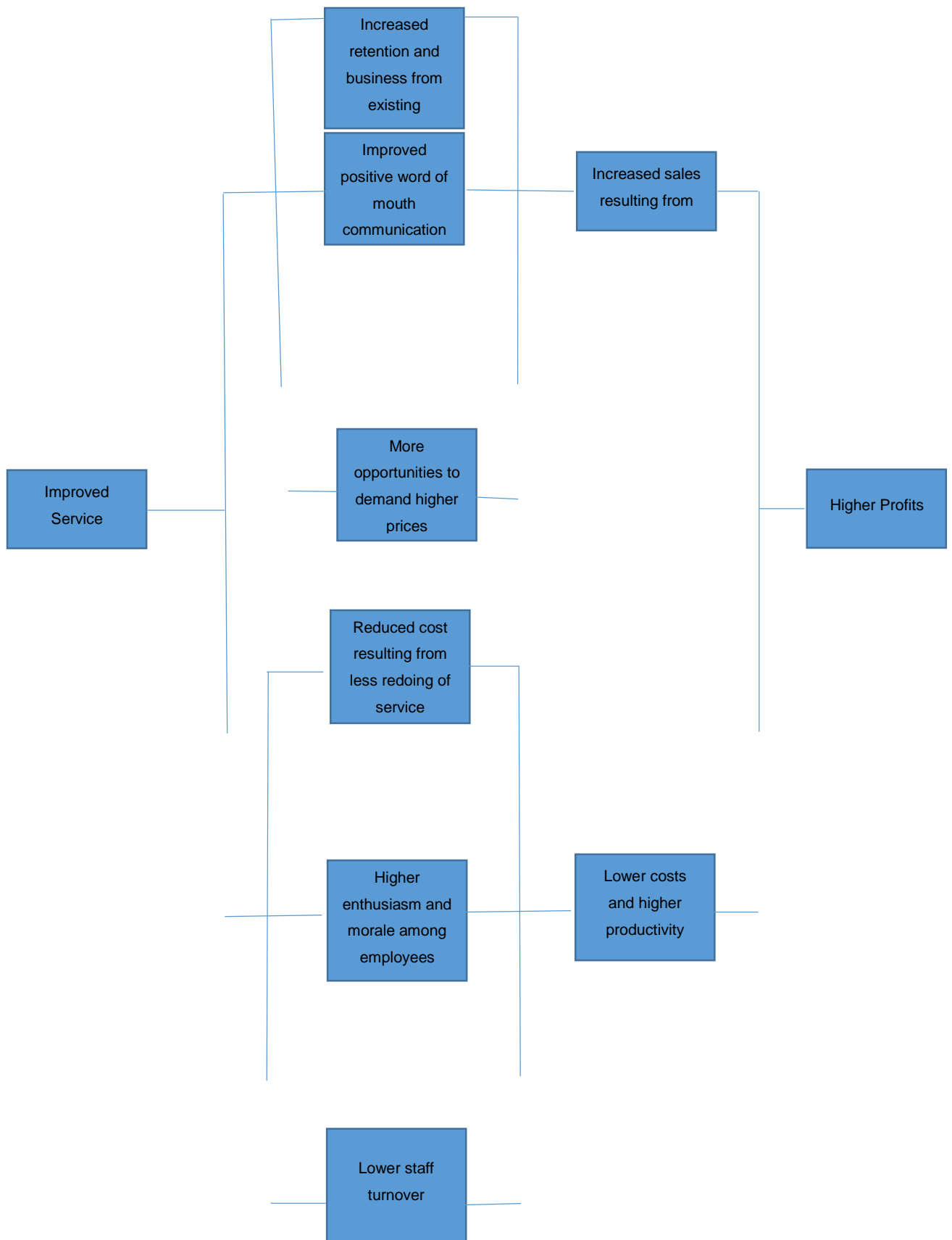
From the first service encounter ('moments of truth') with the store personnel, customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction largely influence the consumers' overall perception of a store's service quality. Furthermore, Human et al. (2013:395) posit that when a customer's first encounter with store personnel is deemed positive, his/her overall perception of the store's service quality will be positive. This concurs with the common statement 'first impressions make lasting impressions'. Starting with the first interaction with store personnel, the subsequent interactions will either improve or

weaken the first impression. Favourable first impressions followed by mediocre service on the second interaction with the customer, tend to leave customers still positive towards the provider of service, however lesser than previously. It can be seen how important first impressions are to consumer attitudes as they set the rhythm of following interactions (Hyken 2013:2). In effect, for a store to maintain favourable strong images after a positive first impression, an evenly superior service encounter is required on following encounters.

On the other hand, it is a possibility that if a customer's second encounter is below standard, the first favourable impression the customer had could vanish. In addition, unfavourable first impressions put the provider of service at a disadvantage. In this situation, recovery from service failure might not be possible as the customer might not return (Hyken 2013:2). Levy and Weitz (2012:506) postulate that more the 25% of shoppers will more likely be driven away as a result of unsatisfactory service than any other aspect of the shopping experience. In general, it is imperative that the first encounter is comprehensive and following service interactions are similarly good. In case of an unexpected slip of service performance, customers might then tolerate such a situation provided it does not recur.

Theron, Bothma and du Toit (2003:94) equate service quality to a bank balance. One can either deposit or withdraw that bank balance. The threat is in making large withdrawals (i.e. sub-standard service) which might lead to an overdraft (sub-standard impression of service quality) which disadvantages the provider of service ability to retain customers. Furthermore, a considerably large first deposit (first impression) strengthens the service provider's position to gain customer loyalty.

However, merely assuming that service quality results in customer satisfaction is not enough. Terblanche et al. (2013:256) comment that rendering reliable service has numerous benefits. Supermarkets that render high quality service have high opportunities of retaining customers and profit from positive word of mouth through advertising. Benefits enjoyed by firms providing superior service include increased market share as a result of competitive advantage, reduced costs of operating as expenses of rework are minimised and increased productivity based on improved employee morale and reduced turnover (Dominic et al., 2010:378). Benefits resulting from service quality are illustrated in Figure 2.2.



**FIGURE 2.2: Benefits of Service Quality**

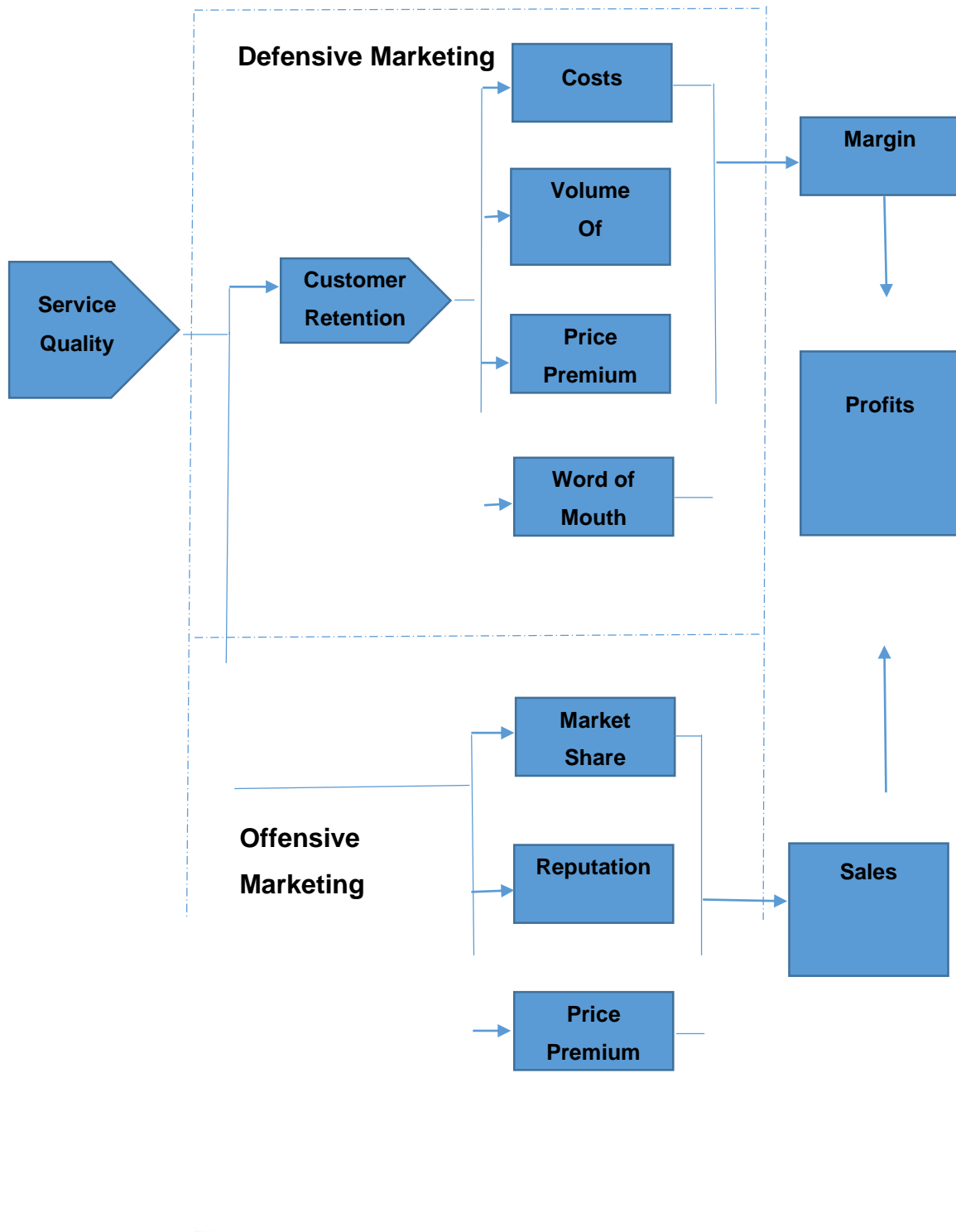
(Dhurup 2003 cited by Prinsloo, Beukes and Pesler 2013:4).

The expense of failing to provide quality service is equally significant. This cost goes beyond losing a single transaction because dissatisfied customers tend to spread negative word of mouth. In this case, the cost of attracting new customers will be larger than that of retaining existing customers. Similarly, Bateson and Hoffman (2011:389) support that customer retention is important for companies to remain profitable and avoid the continuous cycle of seeking new customers. The importance of service quality can be best presented by evaluating its relationship with price, profitability, market share and productivity.

### **2.9.1 Quality and Profitability**

Research on service quality and its impact on profitability have been widely presented in literature. It remains a challenge for researchers to clearly demonstrate the link between quality of service and profits. Zeithaml and Bitner (2013:475) emphasise that investing in service quality cannot be directly linked to profits because of some reasons which include the following:

- Similarly to advertising, investing in service quality does not come with short-term benefits. The results are evident as an aggregate and develop slowly. In addition, service quality represents only one aspect that can influence profits, others include pricing strategies, store image and advertising amongst a few.
- Because of a number of variables that can influence profits, it becomes difficult to single out a specific variable to be largely contributing to profits.
- Lastly, mere investments in service quality do not guarantee profits, rather, it is imperative to invest on the right variables.



**FIGURE 2.3: Relationship Between Service Quality And Profitability**

Source: Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler (2013:477).

Figure 2.3 depicts variables relevant in demonstrating the relationship between service and profits. To address the influence of service quality on profits it is important to differentiate between offensive effects of marketing (i.e. capturing markets and market share) and defensive effects (i.e. customer retention, minimising promotional and marketing costs). Offensive marketing efforts refer to securing new markets by spending more on service quality. In contrast, defensive efforts revolve around keeping existing customers rather than attracting new ones (Gounaris, Dimitriadis and Stathakopoulos 2010:145). Figure 3 depicts the relationship between customer retention and profits by identifying intervening aspects such as cost, premium pricing, the word mouth and increased purchase volumes.

Ahmed, Rahman and Rahman (2009:23) claim that it costs more than twice to attract a new customer than retaining the existing ones. Their research indicates that customer defections influence profitability and market share of firms. There is an increased likelihood that satisfied customers are likely to increase their spending with a particular outlet. Previous research claims that customers who cherish services provided by a particular retail outlet are willing to pay a premium for such services (Levy and Weitz 2012:506).

Moreover, word of mouth is considered a dependable source of information. Levy and Weitz (2012:510) mention that a customer who experiences poor service tells an average of four people about the failure. Financial benefits from favourable word of mouth to supermarkets include reduced promotional costs and increased revenue from new customers.

Nitzan and Libai (2011:24) claim that when a customer is exposed to another defecting customer, there is an 80% chance of him/her defecting too. They recommend that firms should promptly response to a customer defection, in an effort to thwart any possible chain of defections within that customer's domain of influence.

According to Hanif, Hafeez and Riaz (2010:45) an improved service level or offering promotes customer satisfaction, than any other measure which in turn facilitates retention of customers. Furthermore, they associate this resultant satisfaction to repurchase of products, increase in purchase volumes, favourable word of mouth and willingness of customers to pay a premium on products. In their research Yee, Yeung and Cheng (2010:109) reported a positive relationship between employee loyalty, service quality, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and firm profitability. They maintain that employee loyalty largely contributes to service quality, which in turn influences customer satisfaction and loyalty, eventually leading to company profitability. It can be seen that the end result of improved service is long run and goes on influencing other variables before ultimately improving profits. Likewise, findings by Gounaris, Dimitriadis and Stathakopoulos (2010:150) suggest that providing high quality service motivates consumers to buy more (i.e. customer satisfaction and retention) which in turn improves profitability of a business.

Rust et al., (1995 cited by Coelho and Vilares 2010:22) postulate that investing in service quality only helps up to a particular point, from that further investment on quality will be costly. These authors utilised a Return on Quality Approach (ROQ) to explain the relationship between profits and quality. They emphasise that although it is commendable to invest in service quality, spending too much might result in losses. This is evident in today's market trends, Pick and Pay for years has been a retail giant that provided high quality service and products to consumers however, currently it has lagged its peers in advancing its distribution centres. This among other reasons has led Pick and Pay to struggle since 2009 leading to closure of some of its outlets (Stafford 2012:3). This incident shows that there are diminishing returns in investing in quality, therefore firms should seek only optimal levels of investment in quality at the same time addressing other variables that impact profitability.

### **2.9.2 Quality and Price**

Unlike the quality-profitability relationship, the quality-price relationship is quite debatable. From a customer's viewpoint, price entails the amount or effort sacrificed to acquire a product or service. In spite of various research work on the price-quality relationship, findings (i.e. theoretical and empirical) remain indecisive (Dhurup 2003 cited by Prinsloo, Beukes and Pesler 2013:4).

Studies that have attempted to test a positive relationship between price and quality came up with mixed findings. Price is identified as a lesser determinant of quality especially when there are other cues such as brand name, reputation or store image (Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler 2013:478). Zehir et al., (2014:1073) further assert that consumers base their choices on quality or benefits rather than the sacrifice represented by price. This comment infers a negative relationship between quality and price when quality is easy to detect.

Dhurup (2003 cited by Prinsloo, Beukes and Pesler 2013:4) argues that most previous research on price-quality relationships was exploratory and struggled to determine whether or not price infers quality. In addition, informational, individual and product factors were identified as possibilities preventing price to be a quality indicator. On this the author explains that when consumers are aware of company reputation, advertising and other intrinsic cues (informational factors) price might indicate quality.

Research by Olbrich and Jansen (2014:430) indicates that for national brands and non-food private brands high prices infer superior quality. For food private labels a negative relationship was identified signalling that price is not a quality indicator for food private labelled products. However, this study was conducted in Germany, different results might be found in a South African context because of culture issues, diversity or spending capacity of consumers.

On the other hand, for product categories or services associated with high risk, consumers tend to use price as a quality indicator. In determining the relationship between website quality, trust and price premiums at online auctions, Gregg and Walczak (2010:1) identified a positive relationship between quality and price. They propose that service providers with good website quality were perceived as trustworthy irrespective of their eBay reputation whereas those with poor quality websites were not perceived favourably. Furthermore, this resultant trust from high quality websites induced intentions to buy which in turn promoted price premiums



In conclusion, the issue of price as a quality indicator depends on product categories and information available to consumers. In the event that service cues of quality are readily available to consumers like company reputation or level of advertising; consumers opt to use such cues instead of price. On the other hand, when quality is difficult to determine, when there is great variation of quality and price or when there is high perceived risk in buying a product/service; price can be an indicator of quality (Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler 2013:479).

### **2.9.3 Quality And Market Share**

According to Dhurup (2003 cited by Prinsloo, Buekes and Presler 2013:5) the implied relationship between service quality and market share has brought two perspectives in literature. One infers a positive impact of market share on perceived quality. It is believed that a larger current market share signals high levels of quality for consumers. For this reason, firms compete for market share so that they can effect consumers' perceptions of quality.

Another perspective of service quality-market share relationship posits that there is an inverse relationship. It is believed that as market share increases, perceived service quality drops. Increased recognition tends to weaken resources thereby reducing levels of quality. As brand popularity intensifies, the firm's capacity to cater for increased demand might diminish such that service quality might be weakened to serve the increased market. An example is when blackberry phones flooded the South African market, performance of the phones diminished with the Blackberry Internet Service constantly saturated as the Blackberry company continues to struggle to cater for its increased market (Dhurup 2003 cited by Prinsloo, Buekes and Presler 2013:5).

It can be deduced that there is a trade-off between market share and quality therefore it is imperative for store managers to weigh financial implications of any approach. Emphasis on quality might create value whilst market share generates long run profits. A major problem for managers is eliminating the negative impact of increased market share on perceived quality. Application of technology, prompt response systems and customisation might minimise negative perception of quality due to increased market share.

#### **2.9.4 Quality and Productivity**

The increasing sameness of merchandise among supermarkets has induced giant retailer like Pick and Pay, Spar, Shoprite, Woolworths and Checkers to rely on offering high quality service to remain competitive and build a source of differentiation. However, concerns of productivity versus improving quality usually result in a trade-off. Both productivity and quality are a judgement of how well resources are utilised in an activity. This evaluation has two perspectives which are customer's and firm's view. From a customer's perspective, output entails the outcome of the exchange process between the provider of service and the consumer. Customers assess the service process and result by looking at other aspects than productivity. A firm's perspective of output entails the outcome of the transformation process in which firms consider how resources used (Beneke et al., 2012:27).

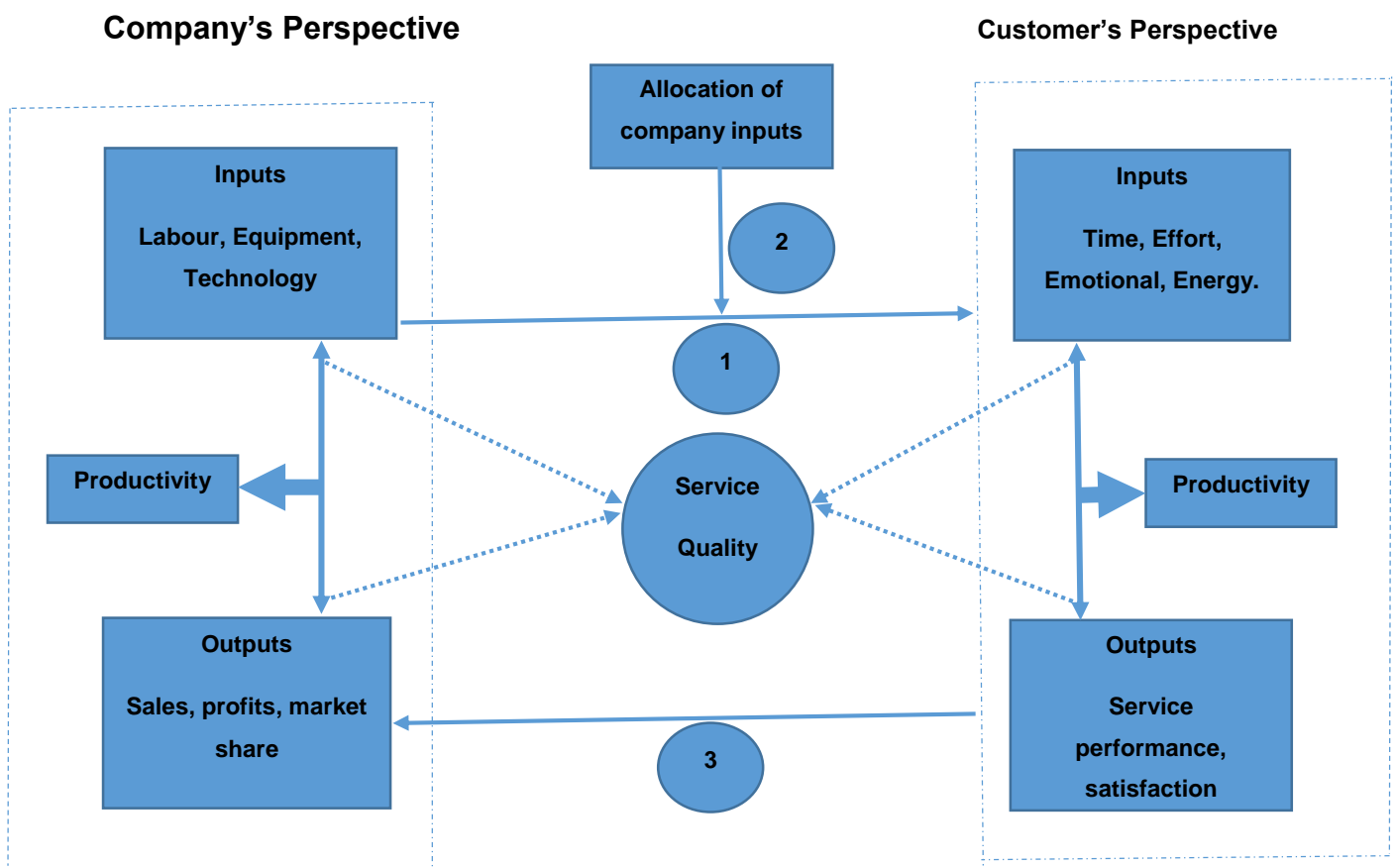
Conflict often arises when considering cost and improving customer service. This is evident when a retailer pursues boosting profits by minimising costs. It is commendable to focus on service productivity in the short run however, this might be detrimental in the future. Productivity may be achieved by increasing output by utilising a less proportional amount of inputs or cutting production cost without a proportional decrease in output. However, in a service context this might be impractical due to the simultaneity of service (Kumari and Sharma 2013:282).

Parasuraman (2002 cited by Strina et al., 2011:2) defines productivity from a customer's viewpoint as the proportion of service outcome consumed by a customer relative to the input offered by the same customer as a partaker in the generation of service. It therefore implies that customers suffer when managers focus on cost cutting service productivity. Similarly, managers fixated on enhancing productivity from a customer's perspective might not afford to do so unless their budget is unlimited. It can be construed that a balanced approach is required when addressing productivity-service quality issues. Both the firm's and customer's perspective must be considered to achieve synergies.

Figure 2.4 depicts the two perspectives (i.e. company and customer) of productivity and how they link with service quality. The inputs from both perspectives influence service quality. Elements of productivity from both perspectives link together. Linkage marked '1' illustrates the idea that if a company expends more resources the

consumers' input diminishes. For example, introduction of barcode scanning techniques in supermarkets lessened the time consumers spend waiting at checkout counters or confirming product prices. Relationship marked '2' explains the idea that if the company incorrectly allocates resources reduction of customer input will not be significant as expected. Linkage marked '3' shows the relationship between the two perspectives. Outputs from a customer viewpoint (i.e. service performance and satisfaction) have an influence on company outputs (sales and profits).

In conclusion, enhancing service quality and maximising productivity results in a conflict especially when a single point of view is considered when defining productivity. It is a requirement that a balanced approach is implemented by considering both the retailer's and customer's perspective.



**FIGURE 2.4: Synergistic Relationship Between Quality And Productivity.**

Source: Parasuraman (2002:9).

## **2.10 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Researchers advocate that quality is an important aspect in delivering service to consumers. Consumers use quality to differentiate competing products, service and retailers (Dominic et al., 2010:378). By simply examining tangible goods, quality can be assessed. However, quality of service cannot be easily determined. In general, quality of service can be assessed once it has been consumed. Equally, Yeo (2008:267) maintains that service quality is complex and encompasses tangible, organisational and psychological aspects of the service industry.

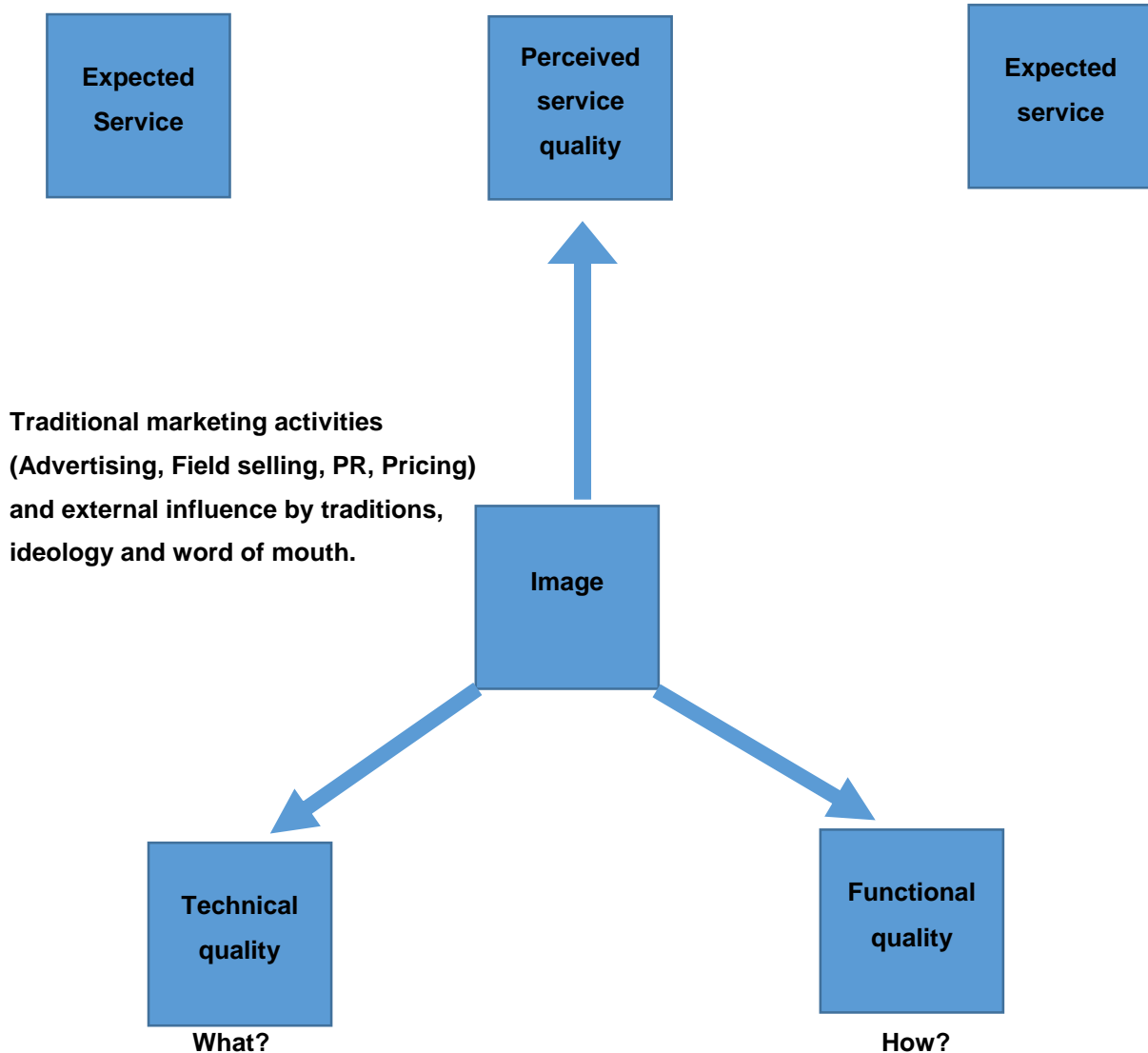
Zeithaml and Bitner (2013:38) assert that high quality service is a crucial determinant of stable profits, repurchase intentions and customer retention. On the other hand, sub-standard service erodes the customer base. Furthermore, outstanding service on a long term basis requires that service quality becomes the culture of the company.

In an effort to better understand the concept of service quality and its management, researchers have proposed several models of assessing service quality which will be reviewed. One of the objective of this study is to determine ways of enhancing customer service that will positively impact on the consumer buying behaviour, an analysis of important models is essential. The following models will be discussed:

- Gronroos service quality model;
- SERVQUAL model;
- Retail Service Quality Scale (RSQS).

### 2.10.1 The Gronroos Service Quality Model

Earlier studies by Gronroos (1984 cited by Akhtar 2011:147) maintained that quality of service comprise of two variables namely expected and perceived service. Figure 2.5 depicts Gronroos' service quality model.



**FIGURE 2.5: Gronroos Service Quality Model.**

Source: Gronroos (1984 cited by Akhtar 2011:147).

To give promises to the market, Gronroos points out that firms utilise traditional marketing efforts like advertising, pricing or field selling. These promises were identified to be influential in the development of consumer expectations of service. In

addition, past experiences with service were acknowledged in the development of service expectations.

Three dimensions were identified which are technical and functional quality as well as corporate image. According to Gronroos (is it the model or Gronroos?) technical quality explains the actual outcome of the service encounter. What occurs in interactions between the providers of service and consumers thereof impacts perceptions of service. Furthermore, what consumers receive from these interactions is the technical outcome of the process. Five output-related attributes compose technical quality, these are:

- Store personnel's technical ability;
- Personnel's knowledge;
- Technical solutions;
- Computerised systems and
- Machine quality (Akhtar 2011:147).

On the other hand, technical quality will not account the total quality in which a customer receives during a service encounter. How technical quality is delivered functionally to a consumer of service influences him/ her. Consumers' perspective of service here is influenced by the availability/ accessibility of store personnel, appearance, behaviour, what and how they say (Thai et al., 2014:14).

In addition, Gronroos (1984 cited by Akhtar 2011:471) posit that self service activities compel consumers to contemplate more of the service (i.e. consumers become more involved). Customers can influence how others perceive the service when they are simultaneously consuming it. Functional quality answers the how question a consumer receives service. Functional quality sub-dimensions that are process related include the following:

- Personnel behaviour;
- Attitude;
- Availability;
- Appearance;
- Customer contact;

- Internal relationship, and
- Service mindedness.

Improving technical abilities of store personnel and use of advanced technology enhances technical quality of service. On the contrary, functional quality of service is facilitated by promoting service encounters that are satisfying for consumers and upholding positive or constructive interpersonal relations with consumers. Based on the above explanation of functional quality, it should be noted that consumers are not only concerned about what they receive but also the manner they receive service (how) (Keyser and Lariviere 2014:31).

Corporate image is the third dimension under the Gronroos model. It refers to consumers overall impression/ perception of the supplier of service. These impressions result from consumers' progressive feelings, attitudes, ideas and experiences with the service provider which are deposited in consumers' memories and later converted into positive or negative evaluations that construct images (Abd-El-Salam, Shawky and El-Nahas 2013:179). Gronroos' idea was that providers of service cannot rely on brand names or distributors to make up a positive corporate image. Consumers are understood to be able to view the service provider on his own and his resources during service encounters.

From the above review, corporate image is imperative to firms as it impacts their profitability, uniqueness and ability to retain customers. Consumer expectations are influenced by their overall impression of the firm i.e. image. Gronroos (1984 cited by Abd-El-Salam, Shawky and El-Nahas 2013:180) argues that service is of utmost importance which consumers view and perceive. Technical and functional quality determine corporate image as illustrated by Figure 2.5. However, more often functional quality is more important than technical quality (Rahman, Khan and Haque 2012:204). Overall, the Gronroos model posits that service quality is customer based and perception of consumers are the main component of the model. The main downside of this model is its great emphasis on functional quality at the expense of the other aspects of service quality.

### 2.10.2 The SERVQUAL model

Several efforts on measuring service quality have been centred on the work of Parasuraman et al., (1988:12) who established the SERVQUAL model meant to analyse quality of service across five dimensions. The inventors of this model proposed that quality of service is derived from comparing customer expectation with perception of actual service rendered. Ai Leen and Ramayah (2011:18) further suggest that the difference between expectations and perceptions results in a service quality gap ( $Q=P-E$ ) i.e. Gap 5. According to Terblanche et al., (2013:272) an extensive service gap indicates poor service in which the retailer has to improve on.

The work of Parasuraman et al. (1988:12) identifies five dimensions of service quality namely tangibles, reliability, assurance, responsiveness and empathy which influence perceptions of consumers when evaluating service performance. Dhurup, Venter and Oosthuizen (2005:141) defined these five dimensions as follows:

- **Tangibles** cover aspects such as appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication material. These indicate aspects that consumers utilise to evaluate quality of service.
- **Reliability** explains how well a provider of service adheres to promises made. It points out issues of consistency and dependability of service performance.
- **Responsiveness** refers to store personnel's willingness to help customers and render service quickly. Additionally, Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler (2013:177) substantiate that providers of service should be active and voluntarily available to assist customers promptly.
- **Assurance** explains the ability of a company to extend courtesy to customers and the service provider's ability to instil trust and confidence in customers. Store personnel need to deliver service that reflects knowledge, politeness and trustworthiness (Lovelock and Wirtz 2011☺).
- **Empathy** describes store personnel's ability to provide personal attention and put themselves in the customers' position. In addition, Terblanche et al. (2013:268) propose that the principle of empathy is delivered through customisation of service.

However, the SERVQUAL model has its shortcomings strongly criticised by researchers over the years. Early studies by Dabholkar et al., (1996:14) and Mehta et al. (2000:62) argue that although the SERVQUAL model has been empirically verified



in a number of research works, it only focused on purely service environments. Applicability of this model in a retail setting has not been proved. Moreover, service categories that were utilised in modelling the SERVQUAL deviate from the ones that can be applied to store retailing (Ai Leen and Ramayah 2011:19). In general, quality of service in a pure service environment differs from a retail environment because in the latter environment quality is viewed not merely on service but consumer goods as well. Das et al., (2010:659) emphasise that retail service activities like finding merchandise and interacting with store personnel to return merchandise or other complaints all are related to service quality and quality of goods.

According to Sandhu and Bala (2011:220) some of the arguments raised by researchers against the SERVQUAL include the following:

The model design and interpretation of results from measuring psychological variables are questionable. Dimensions proposed vary with the kind of service under study. The five dimensions proposed by the SERVQUAL instrument were found to be instable in different contexts. When applied to some industries, the SERVQUAL model lacked consistency. This fostered the works of Dabholkar in developing the Retail Service Quality Scale (RSQS) and Vasquez et al the CALSUPER model to measure quality of service in a retail setting. In addition, Lam (2010:146) claims that complexity of service quality differs with industries under study such that factor-loading of the original five dimensions of the SERVQUAL model remains inconsistent across studies.

According to Cronin and Taylor (1992, 1994 cited by Yildiz 2011:7032) the idea of customer expectations may be unreal or not clearly developed to be a benchmark for evaluating service experiences. Evidence available that support the notion of consumers using perception minus expectation to assess service quality remains inadequate. How expectations are developed remains vague such that using them as a benchmark in evaluating service experience is questionable. There is always a possibility that expectations are simultaneously developed with consumption of service. There is a risk of social bias in formulating expectations among consumers as consumers might feel compelled to stick with high expectations. Furthermore, the SERVQUAL model fails to address the issue of changing expectations with time since consumer expectations are also influenced by their learning or previous experiences (Daniel and Berinyuy 2010:44).

Lengthy questionnaires based on the SERVQUAL model cause boredom and confusion. The process of dispensing questionnaires twice (first one with perceptions and the second one with expectations) is a lengthy one, and causes boredom as well as misunderstanding among respondents which affects the reliability of findings. According to Carman (cited by Luiza 2011:420) it is unrealistic for consumers to complete an expectations account before a service encounter and perceptions after the encounter.

A further criticism of the SERVQUAL model points out that the model overlooks some elements of the marketing mix specifically price. It rather focuses on service and product dimensions only. For this reason, Bahia and Nantel developed the Bank Service Quality (BSQ) as an extension of the original SERVQUAL (Yildiz 2011:7033).

Despite these criticisms, no consensus has been reached on which service quality scale to utilise across industries. To overcome this challenge, the primary content of the SERVQUAL model remains unchanged as it has been remodelled to SERVPERF, SITEQUAL, DINESERV, SERVPERVAL to fit certain industries (Sandhu and Bala 2011:221). Collier and Bienstock (2009:262) maintain that both the SERVQUAL and SERVPERF models are proper tools for assessing quality of service in offline services.

Based on literature, the debate on how to effectively measure service quality remains unsolved and still progressing. Apart from the criticisms, the SERVQUAL model has made a significant input in understanding service quality and its measurement (Ghasemi, Kazemi and Esfahani 2012:1401). However, based on review of literature and issues cited above, this study will mainly focus on perceptions of consumers.

A substantial amount of literature has explored service quality from a purely service perspective and overlooking retail settings that combine consumable goods and service (Terblanche et al., 2013:272). For this reason, Dabholkar et al proposed the Retail Service Quality Scale (RSQS). The RSQS developed by Dabholkar et al is a modification of the SERVQUAL to suit in evaluating service quality in the retail environment. The RSQS constitute of five dimensions with the three having two sub-dimensions.

According to Terblanche et al., (2013:272) RSQS measures service quality across the following dimensions:

- **Physical aspects** cover operational elements like store layout, comfort and privacy and visual elements like architecture, colour, materials and design of store.
- **Personal interaction** refers to willingness of service personnel to render service and instil confidence and trust in customers.
- **Problem solving** entails handling of complaints and helping customers in returning merchandise.
- **Reliability** involves both keeping service promises over a particular period of time and executing service activities right the first time.
- **Policy** is a group of strategies and principles that guide store personnel in their operations such as high quality merchandise, convenient location and operating hours, adequate parking space and payment options.

Replication of the RSQS model over the years by researchers in both developed and developing countries resulted in mixed findings. Some research work validated the use of the RSQS model in the retail sector, some did not and some had to modify the model to fit different economies (Ai Leen and Ramayah 2011:21). Boschhoff and Terblanche (1997:123), Das et al., (2010:658) and Nadiri and Tumer (2009:127) all presented favourable results about the RSQS applicability in a retail setting. In contrast, Siu and Cheung (2001:88) discovered six elements instead of the traditional five. Two new dimensions were added to the RSQS namely promise and convenience. Similarly, Kim and Jin (2002:223) emphasised that the RSQS was better suited for the USA retail outlets than in Korea.

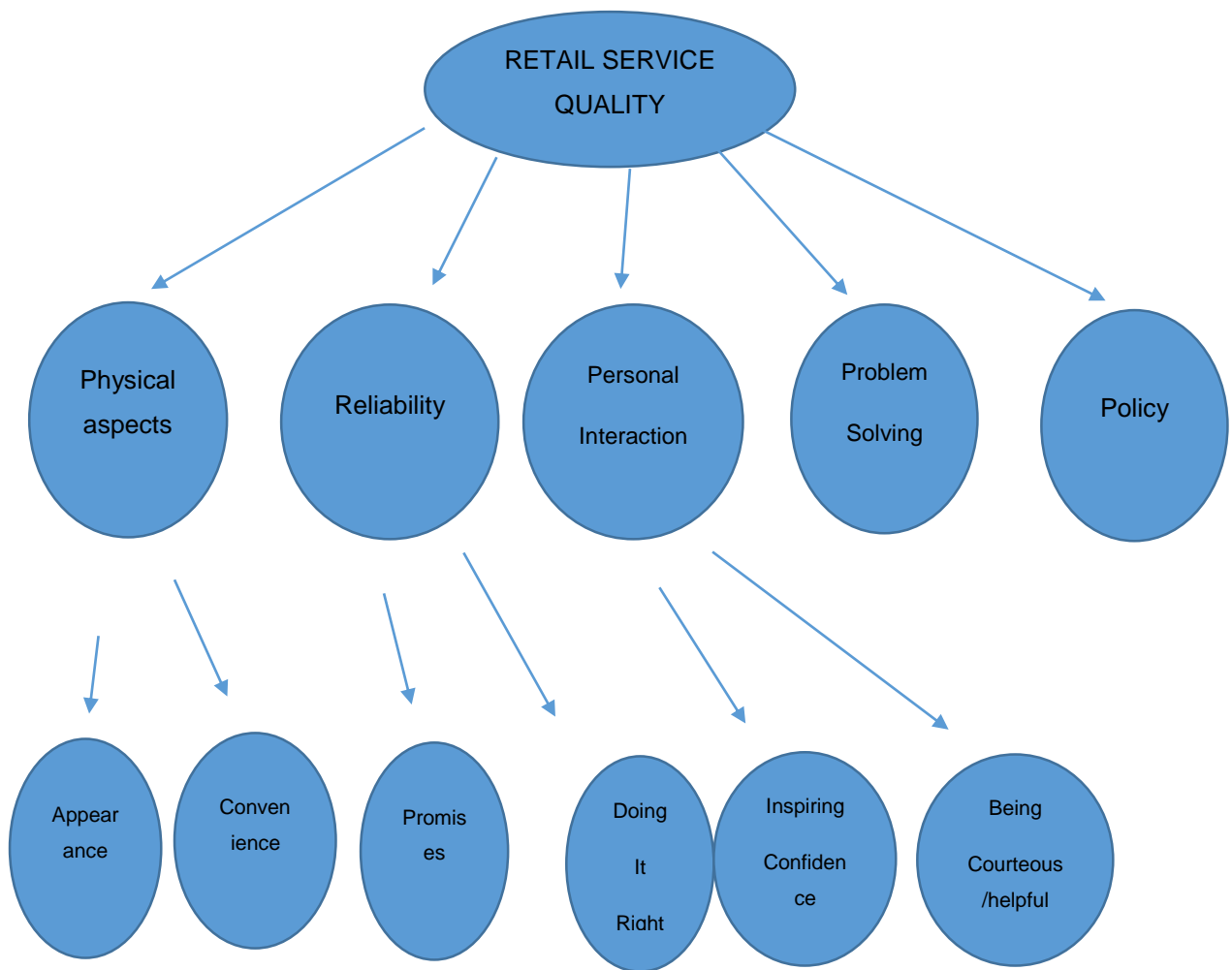
In spite of the negatives against the RSQS proposed by Dabholkar, Thorpe and Rentz (1996:3), the model has been validated in South Africa for retail stores by Boschhoff and Terblanche (1997:123). Likewise, Ai Leen and Ramayah (2011:29) on their study on apparel specialty stores in a Malaysian developing economy, they validated Dabholkar's RSQS. In addition, the RSQS remains a highly sensible model to rely on when researching in the retailing industry (Terblanche et al., 2013:272).

It should be considered that Boschhoff and Terblanche's effort of validating the RSQS in South Africa has its own downside when applied to this study. The authors utilised the RSQS in a hypermarket context not in supermarkets. Compared to hypermarkets, supermarkets are smaller though they offer wide variety and deep assortment of merchandise. They also offer restricted units of home improvement, sports and house

ware products. In contrast, hypermarkets are considerably larger, engage themselves in larger transactions annually and are associated with occasional purchases (Hassan, Sade and Rahman 2013:585). Moreover, supermarket shoppers exclusively depend on self-service whereas in hypermarkets a shopper would require the assistance of store personnel especially in appliances and home improvement area (Levy and Weitz 2012:504).

Based on the above reasoning, perceptions of service quality among shoppers in different contexts (supermarket and hypermarket) might differ. In addition, the perceptions might not cover most of the dimensions proposed under the RSQS (Dhurup, Venter and Oosthuyzen 2005:142). This shortcoming of the RSQS when applied in supermarket context inspired the early studies of Dhurup (2003:320). The author argued that in a supermarket context, the RSQS was more expressive across three dimensions only namely reliability, atmospherics and retailer's policy. These were identified as key in developing and sustaining quality of service in supermarkets.

However, Dhurup's work focused entirely on a target market comprising white people. South Africa has a diverse population such that consideration of other cultures can provide a better perspective of current consumer perception towards service. It is yet to be investigated whether cultural groups influence viewpoints of service quality in a supermarket context. This fresh perspective will lead to the development of an appropriate service quality measurement tool in a South African supermarket context. Figure 2.6 illustrates dimensions of service quality as proposed by Dabholkar, Thorpe and Rentz (1996:3).



**FIGURE 2.6: Dimensions of Retail Service Quality.**

Source: Bhat and Singh (2015:59).

Relevant models on how to test service quality have now been reviewed. These helped in clarifying the challenges faced in ascertaining service quality within service approaches and identify a better model to rely on in the retailing context. However, overlooking how consumers behave in purchase situations undermines the effort of instigating quality in service encounters. Theoretical foundations of consumer behaviour will be discussed in the following section.

## **2.11 CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND CONSUMER DECISION MAKING**

According to Mpinganjira et al., (2013:16) consumer decision making is a renowned issue of how consumers behave in buying situations. It is a relevant phenomenon to marketers who aim at impacting consumer decisions, retailers who are concerned about consumer needs and requirements, and consumer facilitators with an objective to direct consumers in making informed and responsible buying decisions in the marketplace.

Researchers have long been interested with the aspect of consumer decision making. Spanning across a period of 300 years of research when economists like Bernoulli, Neumann and Morgenstern observed the fundamentals of consumer decision making; various consumer theories have been developed that apply in today's marketing conditions (Petra 2012:21). These early studies were conducted from an economic viewpoint and were fixated on the act of purchase. The predominant model from this viewpoint is the 'Utility theory' which suggests that consumer choices are founded on the expected consequence of their decisions. This conforms to Schiffman and Wisenblit's (2014:48) proposal that consumers are sensible decision makers who only pursue their self-interest.

Bray (2010 cited by Sharaf, Isa and Al-Qasa 2015:18) indicates that while the Utility theory identifies consumers as rational decision makers, modern-day research on consumer behaviour acknowledges various issues that influence the consumer and different consumption activities beyond purchasing. These endeavours were identified as need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, the building of purchase intention, the act of purchasing, and consumption and final disposal. Bray (2010:4) emphasises that this holistic interpretation of consumer behaviour has developed through significant phases over the past years facilitated by new research methods and logical approaches conducted.

As consumer behaviour evolved continuously, only since the 1950s the idea of consumer behaviour has reacted to contemporary marketing to cover the more complete range of activities that influence consumer decision making (Blackwell et al., 2001 cited by Petra 2012:21). This is apparent in today's definitions of consumer behaviour that include the following:

According to Schiffman and Wisenblit (2014:30) consumer behaviour refers to consumer actions when searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products or services they expect to satisfy their needs or requirements.

Kotler and Keller (2011:36) define consumer behaviour as a study of the habits of buying and disposing of products, services, ideas or experiences by individuals, groups or firms to satisfy their needs and wants. In addition, different models have been proposed to further develop this issue.

However, the whole idea of consumer decision process that constitute multiple activities can be challenged, not all purchase decisions involve the afore-mentioned activities. Schiffman and Kanuk (2010: 483) point out that consumer decision making is in most cases a process rather than a single action. Furthermore, they mention that this depends on the complexity of the buying decision and level of involvement of the consumer during the decision making process. Impulsive and habitual purchases do not involve the long process of decision making as suggested by Bray. Impulsive purchases refer to fairly swift buying decisions that consumers make at the point of sale without much consideration. In contrast, habitual purchases involve routine buying decisions founded on multiple, similar decisions previously made (Lamb et al., 2008 cited by Mpinganjira et al., 2013:16).

According to Solomon (2010:307) complexity of buying decisions is subject to other reasons apart from product type. Kardes et al., (2011:64) suggest that an interchange of issues influence complexity of buying decisions, these may include the following:

- Consumer's ability and skills of executing a purchasing decision. In a scenario where an individual has not been involved in buying a new computer, he/she will find the experience daunting unlike the one with some sort of experience.
- A consumer's level of involvement in the buying decision process depending on interest in the process or lack thereof. For instance, a nutritionist based on his/her knowledge about food and nutrition impacts on health might be demanding when buying prepared meals at a supermarket.
- Assortment of products that is available to choose from. For example, an inexperienced individual might find it difficult to decide which computer to buy due to the vast number of brands available.

- The environment/ context in which the decision is made. For instance, a first timer in a hypermarket might battle in decision making when buying due to the intensity of the surrounding unlike a patron of a hypermarket or large departmental store.
- It is more sensible to describe consumer decisions after considering the possible impact of consumer traits, product and the context in which a consumer makes a decision on range of complexity between simple to complex (Mpinganjira et al., 2013:17).

## **2.12 APPROACHES TO CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR**

Behaviour of consumers can be highly regarded as a psychological construct as such various approaches have been proposed and embraced in comprehending how consumers execute their decision making. Five approaches are widely recognised which include:

- The economic man;
- Psychodynamic;
- Behaviourist;
- Cognitive and;
- Humanistic.

All these postulate different models of man in purchasing situations and highlight the requirement to observe different variables (Bray 2008 cited by Petra 2012:21).

### **2.12.1 Economic man**

As mentioned earlier, early research observed consumers as exclusively rational such that they pursue their own interests. Petra (2012:22) indicates that consumers make decisions with an objective of maximising utility whilst spending little or no effort. Studies under this area initiated 300 years ago although the concept of 'the economic man' was first mentioned in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century marking the start of perpetual research in this area (Solomon 2010:300).

This approach advocates that rational behaviour from an economic perspective is only possible when the consumer is cognisant of all consumption alternatives available, component to accurately evaluate the available alternative and present to choose the ideal option (Schiffman and Kanuk 2010:36). However, this course of action is no



longer applicable in modern day situations due to the increased complexity of consumers' daily living. Terblanche et al. (2013) observe that consumers are changing and pressed for time to assess each and every purchase option available for them. Similarly, Bray (2008 cited by Sharaf, Isa and Al-Qasa 2015:19) maintains that these steps no longer reflect current consumer decision making, as consumers do not have adequate time to make such flawless decisions as they rely on non-rational stimuli such as social relationships and values. Moreover, consumers have been identified as seeking satisfying options rather than optimal ones, this is reflected in Herbert Simon's Satisficing theory which supports limited rationality (Katsikopoulos and Lan 2011:722).

In conclusion based on the economic man approach, when a customer visits a supermarket he/she expects to find all products suitable to his/her needs in a single setting and accessing them should require minimal effort. Similarly, when a consumer seeks to return a product to the store, he/she would expect no resistance from store management and service personnel should be readily accessible.

### **2.12.2 The Psychodynamic Approach**

The psychodynamic approach is extensively attributed to Sigmund Freud's work and posits that consumer behaviour is largely influenced by 'instinctive forces' or 'drives' which are beyond conscious thought (Backhaus et al., 2007 cited by Dudovskiy 2013:2). Freud proposed three aspects of the intellect which are the Id, the Ego, and the Superego however, researchers studying within this scope uncovered different drives particularly Jung (Bray 2010:4).

Bray (2010:4) suggests that the underlying principle of the psychodynamic approach is that behaviour is influenced by biological drivers not an individual's cognition or environmental stimuli. Likewise, Hoyer and Macinnis (2008 cited by Dudovskiy 2013:3) advocate that this approach acknowledges biological drivers as key drivers of consumer behaviour.

However, the most notable criticism of this approach is its lack of empirical validation in its evaluation of consumer behaviour. Most of the work proposed by Freud encompasses theories that are subjective and challenging to scientifically prove. Freud's case studies from which the psychodynamic theory was developed; study a

single individual making it impossible to generalise findings to the whole population (Schrujjer and Curseu 2014:232).

### **2.12.3 Behaviourist Approach**

John B Watson made a significant study into human behaviour during the 1900s. The study experimented on a child in studying behaviour by using repeated pairings of loud noises to make the child fear non-threatening objects. In its findings, the study disputed the previously dominant Psychodynamic approach by proving that behaviour can be learnt by external events (Reese 2013:50).

In essence, behaviourism is a group of philosophies which maintain that human behaviour is determined by external stimuli and what people do including actions, opinions and emotions are all behaviours. The causality of behaviour under this theory is viewed as linked to dynamics external to an individual (Rothlin 2013:749). Significant advocates of the behavioural approach included Ivan Pavlov who explored classical conditioning, John Watson who disregarded self-examining methods and Skinner who proposed operant conditioning. According to Bray (2010:5) these methods relied on rational positivism claiming that aims and pragmatic methods in physical sciences can be applied to studying consumer behaviour.

Various sections of research correspond to the major principles of behaviourism, although they differ slightly in some ways. Classical behaviourism developed by Watson at its initial stages required studies towards consumer behaviour without mental life or internal states. Internal cognition was considered irrelevant and humans were believed to be born with a blank mind (McLeod 2013:4).

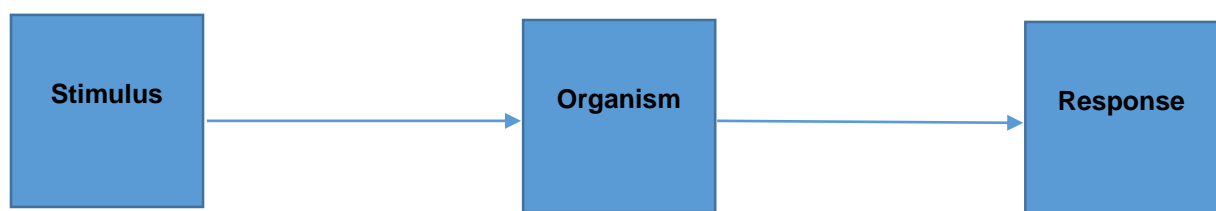
Radical behaviourism was proposed by Skinner in response to the shortcomings of the classical behaviourism. It acknowledged the presence of internal incidents such as feelings, state of mind and self-examination although it regarded these aspects as epiphenomenal. The notion of internal cognition continued to evolve over the years which led to the development of Cognitive behaviourism asserting that intrapersonal cognitive events and processes are a primary determinants of open behaviour (Bray 2010:5). Regardless of the contribution that the behaviouristic approach has made in our comprehension of consumer behaviour, today it is viewed as lacking of the complete explanation possible. The approach lacks a full account of the diversity present among consumers when responding to comparable or matching stimuli. In

addition, this approach does not acknowledge the impact of an unconscious mind on behaviour rather it focuses on observable behaviour (McLeod 2013:10).

#### 2.12.4 Cognitive Approach

In contrast to the behaviouristic approach, the cognitive theory accredits behaviour to internal cognition. In general, the consumer is regarded as frequently processing information (Schiffman and Wisenblit 2014:35). Although this approach clearly challenges the behaviouristic theory, it acknowledges the prominent function of the environment whereby consumers search for and acquire environmental and social stimuli to assist their decision making (Bray 2008:6).

Early research in cognitive psychology resulted in the development of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model which suggested a linear relationship among stimuli, the consumer and the response he/she makes (as shown in Figure 2.7).



**FIGURE 2.7: Stimulus-Organism-Response Model.**

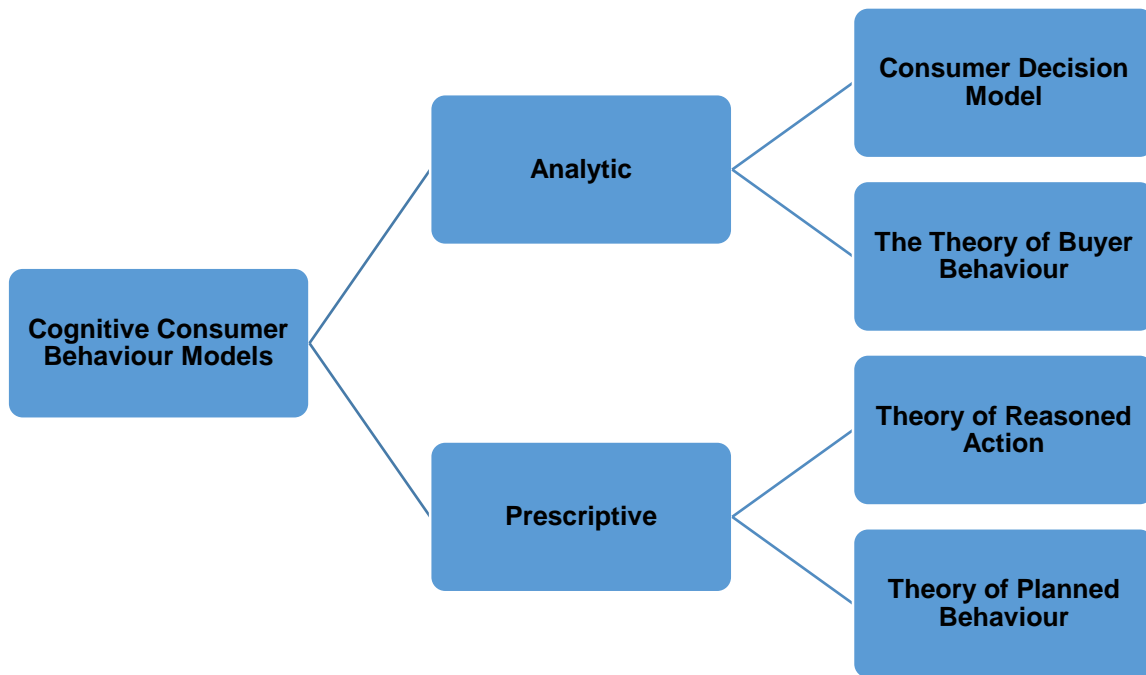
Source: Bray (2010:7).

From figure 2.7, environmental and social stimuli are depicted as outward antecedents to the consumer. Early SOR models assumed the consumer (i.e. organism) was inactive and unaware until a certain stimulus acts upon him/her (Eysenck and Keane 2000 cited by Bray 2010:7). In contrast, contemporary research indicates that processing of information is executed by an active organism with past experience that can influence information processing, information selection as well as receiving it (Schiffman and Kanuk 2010:36). In spite of coming from a radical behavioural viewpoint, the cognitive approach has strengths that can be identified. These include the following:

- Its applicability in explaining today's buying and consuming behaviours among consumers.
- It tends to bring some sense of consensus in a still growing field of inquiry that aims at explaining consumer behaviour.
- Massive use of the cognitive approach in explaining consumer behaviour in disciplines such as social sciences and humanities has facilitated the conceptual development of this perspective of consumer research.
- Its ability to explain convoluted behaviours of consumers which the behaviouristic approach finds it difficult to determine contingencies controlling response (Schiffman, Kanuk and Wisenblit 2010:225).

On the other hand, the cognitive approach to consumer decision making has been criticised for a number of reasons. Foxall (1990 cited by Bray 2010:9) argues that this approach is extensively based on non-concrete and imperceptible variables which rarely relate to empirical research and assessment. Cognitive approach also identifies consumers as rational, logical and involved decision makers; an identity that has been continuously questioned by researchers over time (Schiffman and Kanuk 2010:255). In addition, Tyegi (2004), Kahle and Close (2006 cited by Dudovskiy 2013:9) point out that the SOR model does not acknowledge the existence of past experience in individuals when making purchase decisions.

Notwithstanding these arguments, the cognitive approach is still considered an appropriate model in evaluating consumer purchasing behaviour. Unlike behaviour models, the cognitive approach is capable to adapt to complexities associated with consumer behaviour. Furthermore, advantages of ethical purchasing are vicarious such that intrapersonal assessment is a requirement. Fundamental research studies by Hines and Ames, Nicholls and Lee, and Shiu et al have all complied to the idea of cognitive approach in evaluating consumer behaviour (Bray 2010:8).



**FIGURE 2.8: Cognitive Paradigms of Consumer Behaviour.**

Adapted: Bray (2010:10).

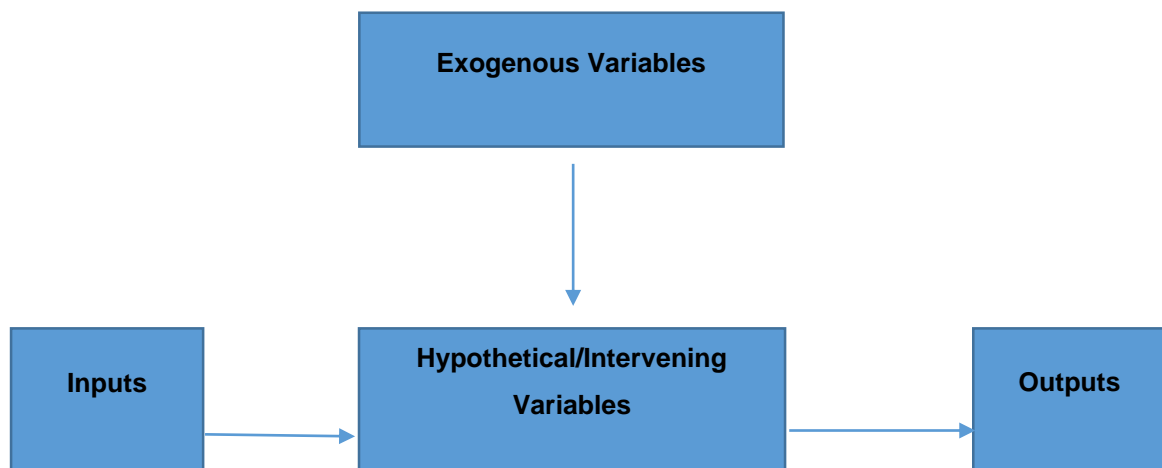
Bray (2010:9) claims that there are two models of cognitive learning as illustrated by Figure 2.8 which are analytical or prescriptive. Analytical models (grand models) help in explaining crucial aspects in the behaviour of consumers. An excess of impacting factors are uncovered under these models and hint of relationships between issues in consumer decision making. These grand models often follow the renowned five step process in consumer decision making (i.e. problem identification, information search, evaluation of options, selection and evaluation of selection (Schifman and Wisenblit 2014:40). In addition, analytical models comprise of the Theory of Buyer Behaviour proposed by Howard and Sheth and the Consumer Decision Model by Blackwell et al (Milner and Rosenstreich 2013:108).

Alternatively, prescriptive models set standards or outline how behaviour of consumers should be organised. These models prescribe the manner in which aspects of consumer decision making should be presented and the effect that should be expected taking into account of influencing factors (Mohammadi and Mohamed 2011:152). Bray (2010:9) adds that these models are important to researchers capable of ascertaining stimuli and how it should be altered to influence consumer response. In this case, customer service approaches that can evoke positive responses from

consumers. Prescriptive models cover the Theory of Reasoned Action and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Milner and Rosenstreich 2013:108).

### 2.12.5 Analytic Cognitive Models (Grand Models): Theory of buyer behaviour

Advanced by Howard and Sheth in 1969, the Theory of buyer behaviour integrates a number of social, psychological and marketing variables that influence consumer choices into a logical structure of information processing. The essential construction of the model is illustrated by Figure 2.9.



**FIGURE 2.9: Theory of Buyer Behaviour.**

Source: Bray (2010:11).

Input variables entail environmental stimuli in which a consumer is exposed to, and is presented from a number of sources. Three forms of input stimuli can be identified which include significant, symbolic and social stimuli. Significant stimuli explain the definite aspects of products and brands that a consumer encounters. Symbolic stimuli refer to consumer perception of product/service rendered and it is metaphorical and perceptual depending on product/service positioning. It originates from advertisement and promotional efforts (Sahney 2012:3). Bray (2010:11) concurs that these stimuli are actually products/brands representations rendered by service personnel through advertising which indirectly influence the consumer. Social stimuli are attributed to family, peers and reference groups that give insight about product/service offering. In addition, these stimuli are adopted by consumers before decision making (Sahney 2012:3).

Hypothetical constructs (intervening variables) can be split into two, these are perceptual and learning constructs. Perceptual constructs encompass the following:

- Sensitivity to information;
- Perceptual bias; and
- Search for information.

Perceptual constructs look at the manner in which a consumer attains and process information from input variables. Attention is provoked by the time a consumer gets exposed to information. Attention depends on the consumer's responsiveness/sensitivity to information. However, some information might not be processed and information absorption is dependent on stimulus ambiguity (i.e. the perceived uncertainty and less meaningful information). Therefore stimulus ambiguity determines the level of stimulus information the consumer will regulate. Stimulus ambiguity may foster active information search among search. Moreover, information collected and processed may be subject to perceptual bias to fit the consumer's state of mind (Sahney 2012:4). It can be deduced that perceptual constructs regulate, limit and process stimuli received.

On the other hand, learning constructs refer to consumer learning, developments of attitudes and opinions, and the ultimate decision which Hoyer, McInnis and Pieter (2013:430) believe affects resistance, adoption and diffusion of product/service innovation. They cover six aspects that range from a consumer's motive to buy to the ultimate satisfaction that results from purchasing. These foster a response output and include the following:

- Motive which can either be general or precise targets compelling action.
- Evoked set referring to consumer's evaluation of how well a consumption choice will satisfy his/her requirements.
- Decision mediators posit consumers' mental directives or heuristics for evaluating purchase options.
- Predispositions explain consumers' brand preference in the evoked set i.e. attitude towards brands.
- Inhibitors are environmental constraints like limited resources (i.e. time, finances) which inhibit consumer choosing.

- Satisfaction represents a feedback from post-purchase that will be used in the following decisions (Bray 2010:13).

Consumer learning tends to influence the level to which a consumer will consider subsequent purchases and search for information. Howard and Sheth proposed that decision making varies among consumers depending with the intensity of an attitude towards brands which is largely attributed to knowledge or familiarity with product/services (Bray 2010:13). Furthermore, in cases where consumers do not have strong attitudes, they engage in Extended Problem Solving where they proactively seek information to minimise brand ambiguity. It then lowers up to Routine Problem Solving when the consumer becomes familiar with the product group (Mpinganjira et al., 2013:17).

Exogenous variables under Howard and Sheth model influence some or all the above mentioned constructs and therefore impacting the ultimate variables. However, these factors to some degree depend on an individual such that Howard and Sheth did not clarify on these aspects. Exogenous variables encompass the history of a consumer up to the point when observation starts (Sahney 2012:5).

The five output variables on the right side of Figure 2.10 signify consumers' response and follow the on-going steps to purchase:

- Attention refers to the extent of information a consumer takes in when subjected to a stimulus. It indicates the degree of consumer's information intake.
- Comprehension points out processed and understood information that is utilised.
- Attitudes explain the composition of cognition, affect and behaviour towards a stimulus which influences evaluation, liking or disliking a product or service offering.
- Intention entails the consumer's intent or forecast of what they will purchase or consume.
- Purchase behaviour describes the definite act of purchasing which is an aggregate result of all other four variables (Bray 2010:13 and Sahney 2012:5).

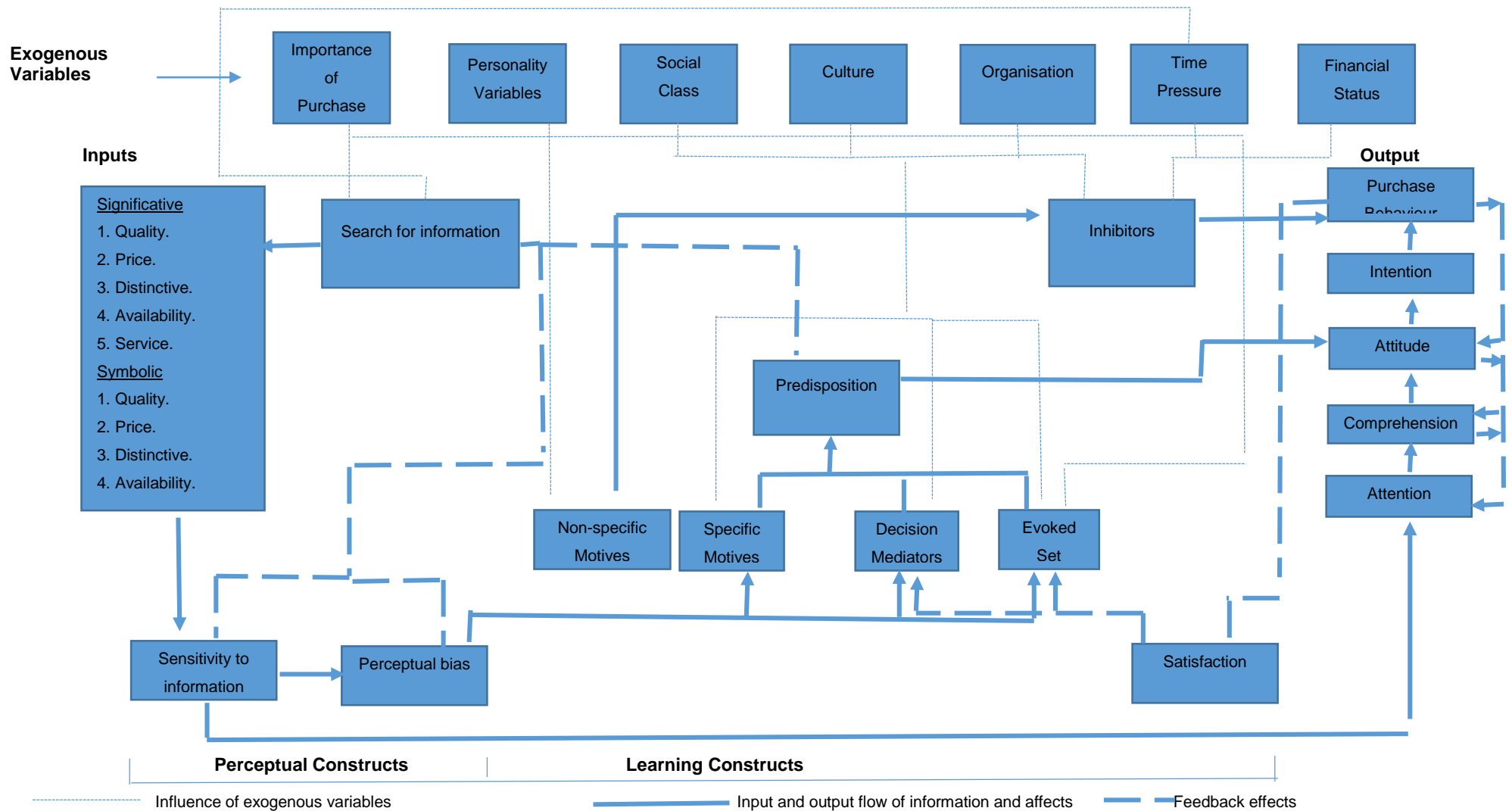
### **2.12.6 Critique of the Theory of buyer behaviour**

Bray (2010:14) comments that the key strength of the Theory of buyer behaviour is its comprehensive coverage of how variables interact within the model. In addition, the



model logically integrates social, psychological and marketing stimuli on consumers and recognises different scenarios of decision making. Milner and Rosenstreich (2013:110) concur that the model is more comprehensive and caters for the technical complexity of the decision making process by including various variables and relationships to internal process, outward triggers as well as information sources.

However, Milner and Rosenstreich (2013:110) further comment that the complexity of the Theory of buyer behaviour is also one of its weaknesses. Research on consumer behaviour postulate that consumers do not necessarily follow the entire model routines and that for routine purchases the model proved to be more complex. Moreover, the model has been questioned for so long about its validity which is considered lacking. Insufficient empirical studies, mathematical methods and examination of how the model is arranged all contribute to validity problems of the model (Bray 2010:15).

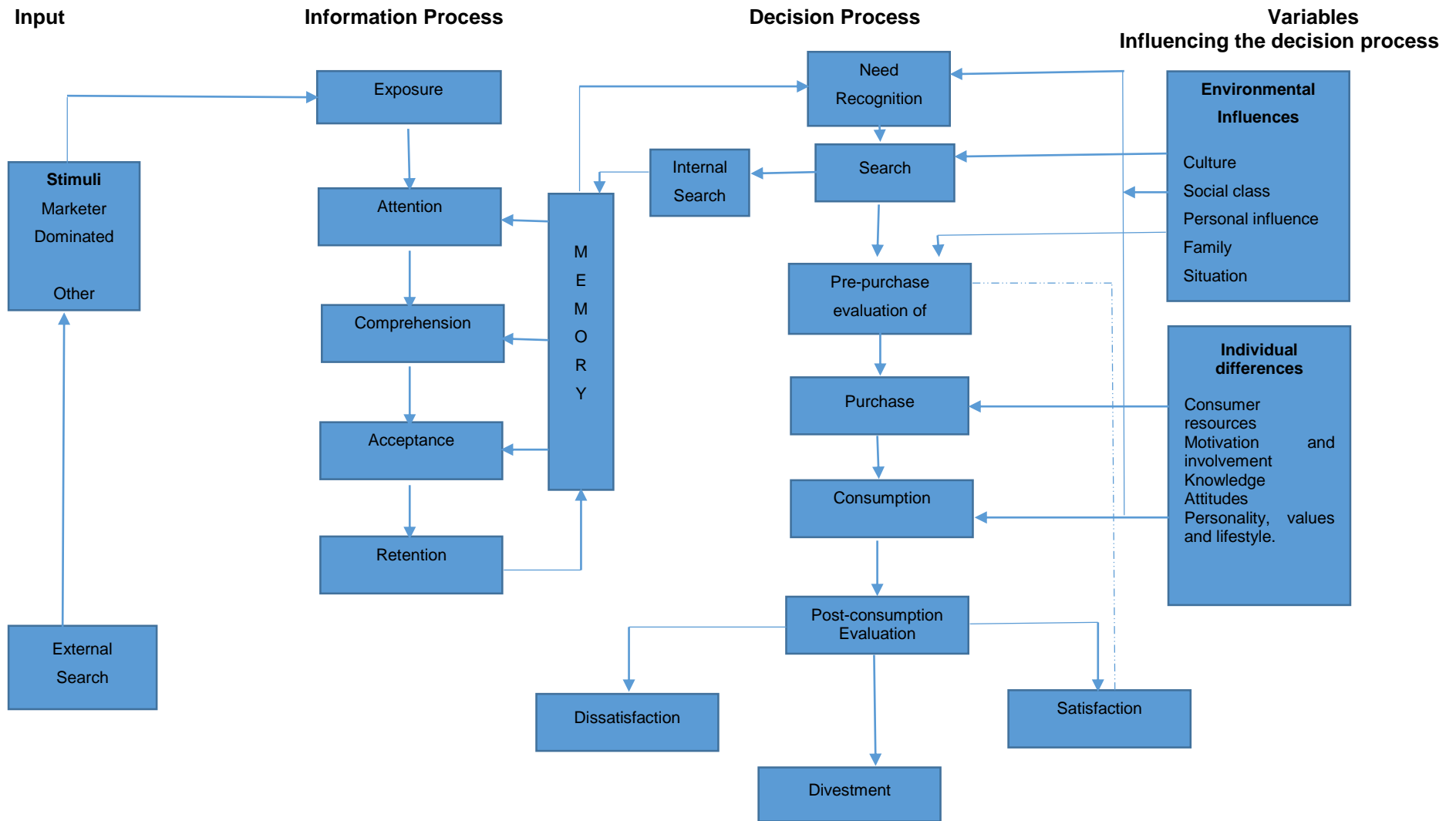


**FIGURE 2.10: The Theory of Buyer Behaviour.**

Source: Loundon and Della Bitta (1993 cited by Bray 2010:17).

### **2.12.7 Consumer Decision Model**

Engel, Kolllat, and Blackwell developed the modern-day Consumer Decision Model in the 1960s. It may be widely recognised as the Engel-Blackwell-Miniard model and has been revised by researchers over the years with the modern publication illustrated by Figure 2.11.



**FIGURE 2.11: Consumer Decision Model.**

Source: Schiffman and Kanuk (2010:36).

Based on Figure 2.11, the Consumer Decision Model to some extent resembles the Theory of buyer behaviour, however the distinction lies in the arrangement of variables and how they interact (Bray 2010:15). The model acknowledges a six stage decision processing which includes: need recognition, search for information (internal or external), and assessment of alternatives, purchase, post purchase evaluation and divestment. Two main aspects influence these decisions these are past experiences and outward variables. Initially when stimuli is received by the consumer, processing thereof is influenced by past experiences of the consumer, and secondly external variables such as environmental influences and individual differences. Environmental influences comprise of culture, social class, personal influence, family and situation. Individual differences cover consumer resource, motivation and involvement, knowledge, attitudes, personality, values and lifestyle (Fang-Ming, Yu-Tzeng and Tu-Kuang 2012:3257).

The starting point to the decision process is need recognition when the consumer recognises some inconsistency between the current situation and what is desired. In general, the consumer recognises the existence of a need. An interplay of processed stimuli inputs, environmental and individual influences drive this process. After a need has been identified, the consumer conducts an information search (both internally and externally) via the memory and past experience (Ali and Haibing 2014:57).

Researchers maintain that this model is appropriate in clarifying scenarios involving extended problem solving and Limited problem solving by altering the extent to which a number of phases of the model are involved in by the consumer (Loundon and Della Bitta 1993 cited by Bray 2010:17). The degree of information search varies with the kind of problem solving such that new or complex consumption patterns require massive external searches of information, whilst routine or simple patterns rely on simple internal searches of past behaviour (Mpinganjira et al., 2013:17). According to Engel-Blackwell-Miniard model, the information passes through five phases of processing which include: exposure, attention, comprehension, acceptance and retention as illustrated by Figure 2.11.

Beliefs, attitudes and purchase intentions are used to assess alternatives available. Both environmental and individual variables play part in influencing the process of evaluation. Inhibitors are not openly shown to be intervening between intention and purchase, nevertheless environmental and individual variables are acknowledged. In addition, situation is included under environmental influences but is not explicitly defined which could cover factors such as insufficient time or financial constraints, all of which limit the consumers from finalising their purchase intentions (Yamamoto, Li and Morikawa 2014:951).

Post consumption evaluation follows actual consumption of product/services which will serve as a reference for future searches and formation of beliefs. This evaluation informs the consumer whether or not the consumption was satisfactory. The final phase of consumption pattern is divestment which indicates that items purchased will eventually be disposed of (Schiffman and Kanuk 2010:37).

#### **2.12.8 Critique of the Consumer Decision Model**

The continuous advancement of the model since its initiation in the 1960s can be identified as a key strength. Contemporary insights have been added to enhance the descriptive muscle of this model in view of changes in consumer behaviour theories and knowledge. An example of such a case is the insertion of consumption and divestment, thereby harmonising modern-day definitions of consumer behaviour that cover such variables in their scope (Solomon 2013:156).

Bray (2010:18) mentions that the model presents a well-defined illustration of consumption which makes it easy to comprehend and naturally attractive. On the other hand, its systematic approach is criticised by researchers as it restricts a number of consumer decision scenarios (Erasmus et al., 2001 cited by Bray 2010:18).

In contrast to the Theory of buyer behaviour, the model depicts the influences of external variables (environmental and individual) to specific portions of the process. It overlooks the impact of these variables on a wider scope of the consumption process. For instance, individual differences may considerably effect marketing stimuli (the service encounter/product) which a consumer is initially exposed to and the manner in which these stimuli are received and processed (Devi et al., 2015:109).

Definitions and roles of environmental and individual influences remain unclear for example, the effect of environmental variables is depicted yet their specific role in

influencing behaviour is vague. Furthermore, influence of individual motives is only referred to need recognition thereby neglecting a significant theoretical area to consider (Gupta and Guleti 2014:34).

### **2.12.9 Critique of Grand Models**

Bray (2010:18) comments that grand models do not go beyond being an imitation of occurrences they represent. They identify variables and how they interrelate. Although these models facilitate a visual comprehension of what occurs as variables change; they have been questioned and a number of limitations have been cited. These criticisms include the following:

- Some of the models being developed in the 60s and 70s lacked a comprehensive theoretical background because of the immature nature of the discipline during these times. However, contemporary research seems to have to some extent alleviated the situation (Mandl et al., 2010:7).
- Identification of consumers as rational decision makers has been largely questionable. Modern research argues that consumers frequently make decisions unconsciously in addition, behaviour of consumers has been found to be random, unorganised and opportunistic at times. This contravenes well-defined and inflexible approaches proposed by grand models. Mandl et al., (2010:8) concur that consumers once they discover a product/service as satisfactory they stop decision making. Moreover, grand models neglect the existence of emotions and heuristics in consumer decision making.
- By definition, grand models rely on generalising the consumer decision process. This overlooks the existence of diverse decision making scenarios, product groups and outcomes which could bias research (Mohammadi and Mohamed 2011:156).
- Grand models portray a positive perspective towards decision making while literature maintains that consumers are not at all times in straight forward situations whereby there are accessible to information needed for evaluation. For this reason, consumers often opt for an alternative approaches not reflected in grand models (Mohammadi and Mohamed 2011:156).

### 2.12.10 Prescriptive Cognitive Models: Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

Based on a strong belief that beliefs and attitudes ascertain buying behaviour of consumers, prescriptive models were developed in the 1960's. Martin Fishbein proposed the renowned model in this field which asserts that a consumer's overall attitude towards products/ services is determined by his/her beliefs and feelings towards multiple attributes of the product/service (Southey 2011:44). Bray (2010:20) expressed the Fishbein's model algebraically as follows:

$$A_0 = \sum_{i=1}^N B_i a_i$$

Where:  $A_0$  = the consumer's overall attitude toward product/service 0.

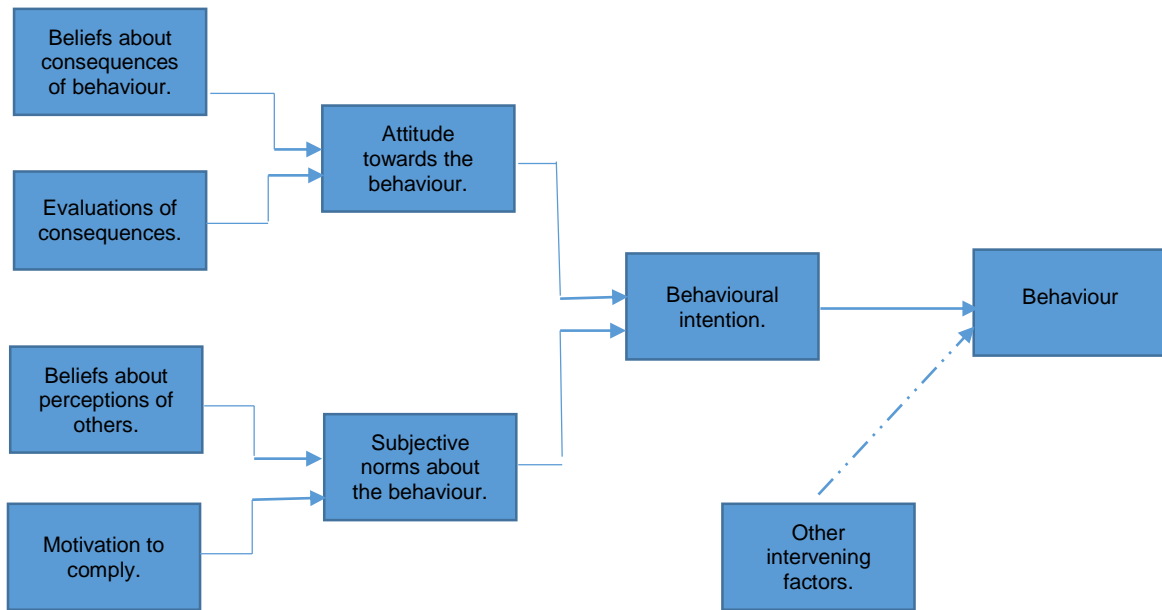
$B_i$  = the intensity of belief that the product/service possesses an attribute  $i$ .

$a_i$  = the extent of feeling (liking/disliking) toward attribute  $i$ .

$N$  = the amount of applicable beliefs considered by the consumer.

Further advancement of this model to not only focus on evaluating attitudes, but behaviour resulted in the development of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) illustrated by Figure 2.12.





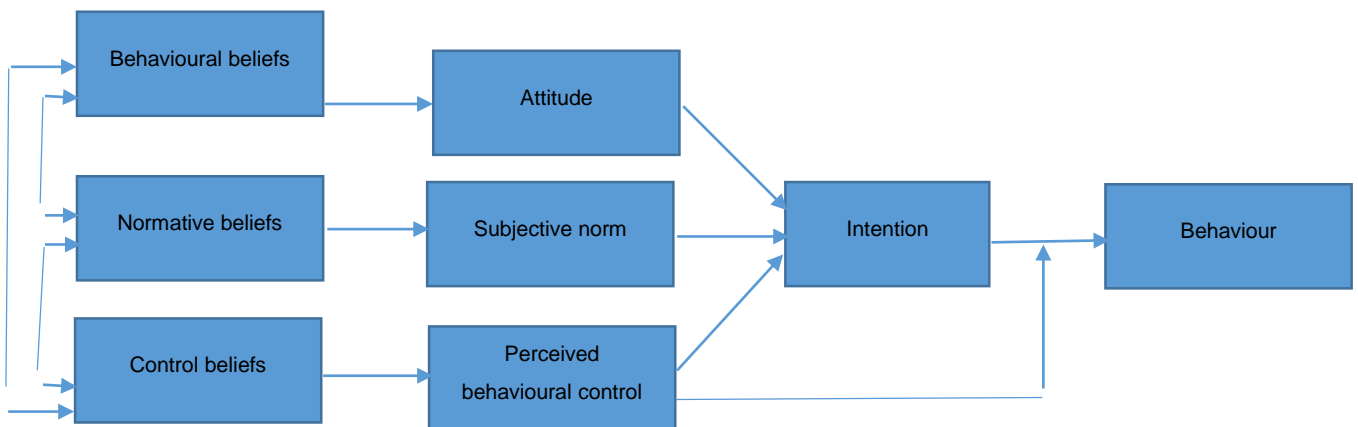
**FIGURE 2.12: Theory of Reasoned Action**

Source: Bray (2010:21)

Behaviour is ascribed to behaviour intention which is generated from combining the consumer's attitude towards the behaviour (i.e. buying product/consuming service) and subjective norms about the behaviour (Southey 2011:44). By including subjective norms, the model recognises the probability of other individuals effecting behaviour naturally and this is regulated by the consumer's level of motivation to comply with such opinions (Solomon, Russel-Bennet and Previte 2013:25). Miller (2005 cited by Bray 2010:21) suggests that influence of attitudes and subjective norms will not necessarily be equal in determining the behaviour. It depends on the consumer's tendency to rely on other's opinions, the buying situation at hand and the product/service type with openly consumed items greatly influence by subjective norms unlike inconspicuously consumed items (Schultz 2006 cited by Bray 2010:21).

One of the contributions made by the TRA is its ability to measure the attitude towards behaviour than the general attitude toward the object. This contribution is important once behaviour is measured because an individual might have a positive attitude towards a product, but not the act of buying it (Solomon, Russel-Bennet and Previte 2013:26).

Empirical investigations and applications of the TRA presented a significant association of attitude toward behaviour and subjective norms to behavioural intentions, although, some researchers argue that this high connection between behavioural intention and actual behaviour is over-simplified due to situational constraints (Aleassa, Pearson and McClurg 2011:665). Based on multiple reasons, behaviour is not entirely controlled by the actor it is therefore imperative to add another variable intervening between intentions and actual behaviour (Bray 2010:22). For this reason, Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) was developed by Ajzen. The TPB (Figure 2.13) below is an addition to the TRA that aims at addressing over-dependence on intention in determining behaviour.



**FIGURE 2.13: Theory Of Planned Behaviour.**

Source: Ajzen (2006 cited by Bray 2010:22).

The added construct ‘perceived behavioural control’ is developed by integrating the assumed existence of variables that may foster or impede operation of a behaviour and the perceived influence of each of these variables. Actual behaviour control describes the degree to which the consumer possesses skills, resources and other requirements to portray a particular behaviour. Behavioural intention under the TPB is regulated by a combination of attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control factors. To a greater extent, actual behaviour is ascribed to behavioural intention although, perceived behavioural control variables might intervene. It is believed that when individuals are confident enough of their abilities the chances are high of them performing a particular behaviour i.e. building a stronger behaviour intention (Baker and White 2010:1593).

The TPB has been widely credited as an appropriate expectancy-value theory such that it has been applied in numerous behavioural studies. It has been empirically tested and discovered to have considerably enhanced the predictive ability than the TRA (Bray 2010:23). However, revisions or additions to the model have been accepted over the years to suit different contexts without necessarily altering the primary design of the theory. An example was the development of the Technology Acceptance Model (TMA) by Davis which was aimed at determining computer acceptance among consumers. Recently, Yousafza, Foxall and Pallister (2010:1172) confirmed that the TMA was highly predictive of consumers' behaviour in internet banking compared to other two models (i.e. TRA and TPB).

#### **2.12.11 Critique of Models**

Empirical studies of the TPB strongly support this model because of its predictive validity. The theory is credited for its sensible explanations of information and motivational influences on behaviour, it is easy to understand, and can be relevant to various contexts of consumer behaviour. However, some constraints of the model have been mentioned that limit it from becoming a comprehensive model for consumer decision making (Wang and Ritchie 2012:1062).

Predictive ability of Prescriptive cognitive models depends on the researcher's skill to precisely observe and measure all noticeable factors that consumers evaluate in developing an attitude (Solomon et al., 2006 cited by Bray 2010:24) . In practice, consumption scenarios are quite complex and involve use of conscious and sub-conscious variables which makes it almost impossible for the researcher to ascertain. The models rely on cognitive processing yet other approaches acknowledge the use of emotions, habits, cravings and impulse in consumer decision making (Schiffman and Kanuk 2010:255). Solomon et al. (2006 cited by Bray 2010:24) comments that behaviour in some scenarios may not be determined by attitudes, rather by an 'affective' response in a process.

It should be noted that both the TRA and TPB have been extensively applied in Western cultures not as much as in other cultures leaving a gap of whether or not these models can apply to other cultures. Bray (2010:24) mentions that limited findings propose that these models are less effective across cultures.

In conclusion, intention is a volatile aspect as consumers constantly re-evaluate when situations change or when they access new information. This poses a significant challenge for the model to precisely predict behaviour before the actual purchase as intentions are more likely to be temporary. Likewise, the model overlooks inhibitors to purchase, for instance when a supermarket goes out of stock (Southey 2011:44).

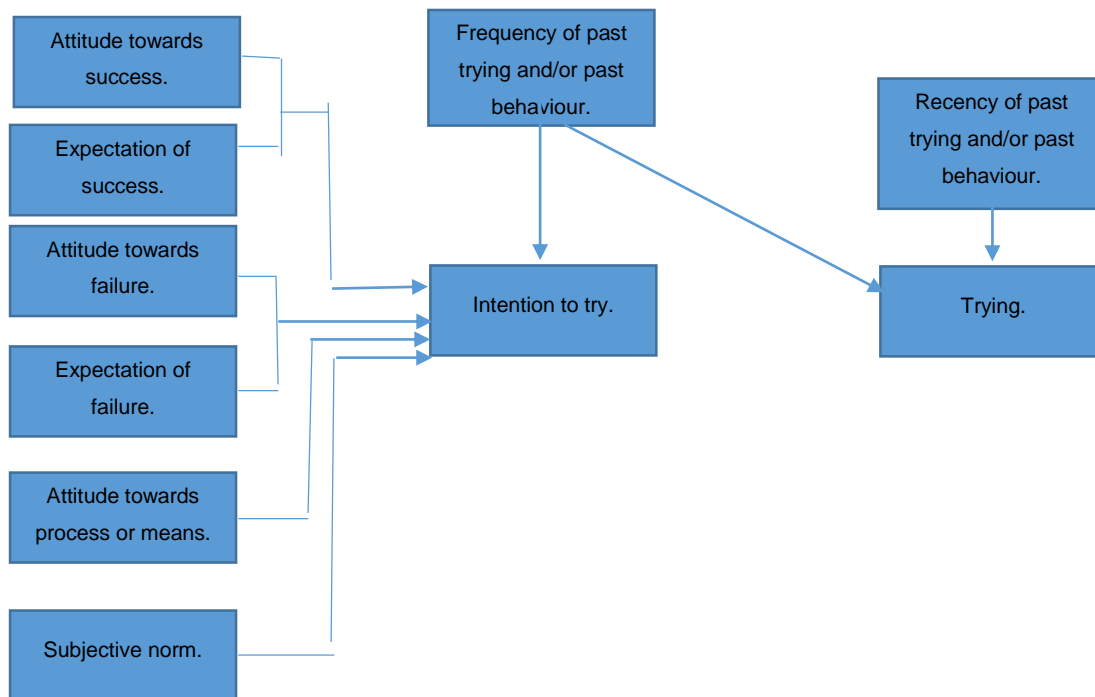
### **2.12.12 Humanistic Approach**

Based on most common Consumer behaviour texts, cognitive models are considered the most appropriate explanation of consumer decision making. However, modern research has been highlighting shortcomings of such models in an effort to advance the understanding of aspects in consumer behaviour. This new approach has been identified as humanistic which investigates concepts reflective to a particular consumer instead of describing the traditional processes (Solomon, Russel-Bennet and Previte 2013:27).

Three pressing reasons were cited that fostered the development of humanistic models. Firstly, cognitive models are widely regarded as viewing consumers as rational decision makers this ignores the aspect of emotions in making decisions. Secondly, studies have been investigating the idea of volition. These studies aim at understanding and addressing the gap between purchase intentions and the actual purchase act by comprehending the voluntary stages to decision making. Thirdly, there has been extensive focus on self-centeredness during decision making in marketing concepts at the expense of altruism. Inadequate research on the influence of selfless motives in consumer behaviour has facilitated the development of humanistic approaches (Owuor 2014:138).

### **2.12.13 Humanistic Models of Consumer Behaviour: The Theory of Trying**

Proposed by Bagozzi and Warshaw in 1990, this theory instead of investigating specific behaviour, it evaluates trying to act. Crucial variables to intention to try under this theory are subjective norms, attitude toward the process (means of buying), attitudes and expectations of success and attitudes and expectations of failure depicted below. This theory also integrates past behaviour as an important influence on consumer preference (Bray 2010:26).



**FIGURE 2.14: Theory Of Trying.**

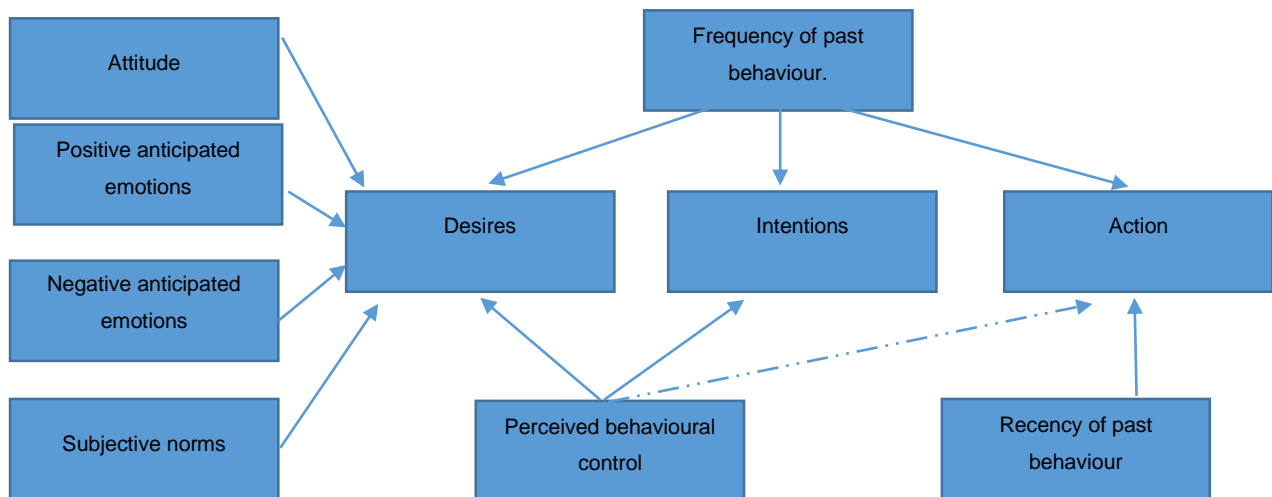
Source: Bagozzi, Gurhan-Canli et al., (2002 cited by Bray 2010:27).

In support of this theory, Gould et al. (1997 cited by Bray 2010:27) in their research revealed why consumers fail to try to consume. Consumers are believed to either fail to identify or are unaware of their alternatives, or consciously decide not to consume (Schiffman and Kanuk 2010:36).

### 2.12.13 The Model of Goal Directed Behaviour

Although this model is derived from the TPB it has some notable differences, firstly it includes variables of past behaviour (frequency and recency) and emotions (positive and negative) and secondly, its arrangement of behavioural causation passing through desire then intention (Wang, Hong and Wai 2010:145).

This recent model benefited from growing research efforts previously made. It unveiled a new variable 'desire', which is strongly believed to be a major contributor of intentions than attitudes, subjective norms or perceived behavioural control (Bray 2010:27). Compared to the TRA and TPB, this model has a better predictive ability however, it is viewed as complex and needs complex data collection techniques (Wang, Hong and Wai 2010:148).



**Figure 2.15: Model of goal directed behaviour**

Source: Bagozzi, Gurhan-Canli et al., (2002 cited by Bray 2010:27)

This section in reviewing literature has explored various approaches in demonstrating how consumer decision making can be embraced. This field of study based on literature shows that research is still an ongoing process, such that new intuitions are expected to be unveiled in enriching comprehension of consumer behaviour. As mentioned earlier, the function of ethics, social responsibility and altruism have been overlooked by the aforementioned models of consumer decision making. Consideration of such missing ideas would significantly contribute to this growing body of knowledge (Bray 2010:28).

On a positive note, the appraisal of consumer decision models above demonstrates the complexity of the concept of consumer decision making process and pin points crucial antecedents that determine behaviour. In an effort to explain behaviour, a number of variables have been proposed by different models with each of them justified for its enclosure. It remains a challenge to recommend single model that maintains to cover all matters or variables that influence consumer choices. This confirms why different modes have been applied in different contexts to demonstrate their predictive validity (Yousafza, Foxall and Pallister 2010:1172). Reviewing of consumer decision making models will assist in designing questionnaires such that variables that determine behaviour will be included. This facilitates achievement of this study's objective of understanding customer experience and how it influences consumer buying behaviour.

## **2.13 CONCLUSION**

Chapter 2 of this study, reviewed literature related to customer service and consumer behaviour. It has been discovered that consumers are rational decision makers that only pursue service packages that satisfy their individual needs by evaluating their perceptions of service delivered against expectations (Levy and Wietz 2012:504). It is imperative that supermarket management has adequate intimate knowledge of their customers to ensure their service delivery satisfies the consumers and remain successful in their operations.

Reviewed literature emphasised the need for ensuring service quality in delivering service for supermarkets to generate sustainable profits, retain customers and ensure positive spread of word of mouth (Terblanche et al., 2013:265). However, supermarket management need to be shrewd and ensure that the cost of initiating and maintaining service quality does not outweigh the benefits of service quality (Aten 2011:3).

Various consumer decision making models were evaluated in Chapter 2 to gain clarity on how consumers behave. It has been discovered that this field of study is still an on-going process as aspects such as ethics, social responsibility and altruism have been overlooked in most models (Bray 2010:28). However, appraisal of consumer decision models assisted in unveiling crucial aspects of consumer behaviour that were included in questionnaire construction of this study. The following chapter (i.e. Chapter 3) discusses the research design, data collection methods and analysis of data employed in this study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The main aim of this study was to determine the influence of customer service on consumer buying behaviour at selected supermarkets within the greater Durban area. Previous chapters (i.e. chapter 1 and 2) discussed literature on customer service and consumer behaviour in a supermarket context. This chapter provides a description of research methods applied in conducting this study.

This chapter discusses the research design, method of collecting data and analysis thereof utilised in this research project. Methods employed in addressing issues of validity and reliability in this study will also be explained in this chapter. This study was descriptive in nature and answered 'what' questions of this research. Structured questionnaires were utilised in gathering data and statistical techniques in analysing data.

Kumar (2011:175) identifies research as a procedural approach of gathering, analysing and converting data into meaningful information. Equally from a marketing viewpoint, Ijabadeniyi (2014:60) explains that research aims at understanding the target group, the market and competitors. Marketing research involves various procedures in which a research design forms part (Smith and Albaum 2012:2).

#### **3.2 STUDY TYPE**

A survey was conducted in gathering primary data for this study. Lotz (2009:47) mentions that surveys are used in collecting data from larger samples within a limited timeframe making it an appropriate approach for this study. In addition, Malhotra (2010:211) maintains that surveys facilitate uniformity of questions and easier administering of questionnaires giving room for statistical analysis of data.

Self-administered questionnaires were utilised in collecting data. Closed ended questions were used in questionnaire design whereby alternative choices were provided for participants. Armstrong and Kotler (2013:20) substantiate that closed ended questions present all possible answers and respondents choose among them. It is understood that surveys are the most commonly used approach of collecting



primary data in marketing and appropriate for large samples which aided the researcher's decision of which approach to follow.

### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Research methodology goes beyond merely presenting data collection methods. Ideally, methodology should be viewed as a correlation of assumptions that portray how the researcher observes reality. The manner in which this reality is expressed, depends on the method chosen and shows what the researcher seeks to unveil (Kamwendo 2014:58).

Research design indicates the structure for executing a particular research plan and shows detailed information of the techniques applied to acquire information that accomplishes research objectives. The main aim of this structure is to recommend an appropriate approach that answers research questions and aid in decision making (Malhotra 2004, cited by Kamwendo 2014:58). Likewise, White (2009:98) views research design as a point at which research questions are converted into the research project. It indicates the phase when a researcher stops thinking about asking questions but how these questions can be answered. In general, it is not about how to conduct research (i.e. research methods) rather, it is about the rationality of the investigation, the relationships between questions, data and conclusions.

This study followed a descriptive research design to determine the influence of customer service on consumer buying behaviour. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010:182) descriptive research involves either finding the attributes of an observable fact or investigating possible relationships among two or more phenomena, which supports objectives of this project. Similarly, Schwandt (2007:67) views descriptive research as describing, explaining and interpreting the current situation of the area of the study. In general, descriptive research facilitated an overall evaluation of a trend or phenomenon in the greater Durban area which made it an appropriate method to achieve this research's objectives by answering 'what' questions of this study (Churchill and Iacobucci 2010:59).

### **3.3.1 Research Approach**

This study was quantitative in nature. Leedy and Ormrod (2010:94) identify quantitative research as looking at amounts, or quantities of one or more variables of interest. In addition, it attempts to measure variables in certain manner for instance, use of commonly accepted measures (ruler, thermometers) or delicate measures for psychological characteristics or behaviour (i.e. tests, questionnaires, rating scales). This study made use of planned questions in questionnaires in which response options were predetermined to facilitate easier evaluation of research information gathered. Burns and Bush (2010:204) support that quantitative research engages in use of shrewd questions complemented with pre-set response options as well as respondents. Furthermore, Labaree (2013:4) confirms that quantitative approaches are focused measurements involved with arithmetical analysis of data collected through use of surveys and questionnaires. This form of research was considered appropriate for this study as it enabled the researcher to gather current perceptions of consumers towards service in a structured approach (i.e. use of questionnaires). Inferences could then be made objectively about how customer service influences behaviour through use of statistics. Quantitative research assisted the researcher in explaining and predicting consumer behaviour which can be generalised to the population. It facilitated development and validation of existing relationships between service and buying behaviour. Malhotra (2010:103) reasons that quantitative approaches develop and validate relationships among variables which facilitate better accuracy in interpreting data.

To sufficiently meet the objectives of this study, a survey was conducted. Green and Browne (2011:36) suggest that survey research involves obtaining information about one or more group of individuals regarding their characteristics, opinions, attitudes or past experiences through use of questions and tabulating the answers. In addition, this approach enabled the researcher to study the entire population by use of a sample of that population. McBurney (1994, cited by Kamwendo 2014:60) concurs that surveys involve the use questionnaires and samples of the entire population. A series of questions were used to draw responses from willing participants, which were then summarised in the form of percentages, frequencies and statistics such that inferences could be made to the general population based on findings from the sample population.

Cross-sectional research involves collecting information to conclude about a sample under study on a single occasion. In addition, it enables examination of a particular variable across diverse groups that share similar characteristics, opinions or attributes (Hall 2011:173). For the purpose of this study, cross-sectional research assisted in describing what characteristics exist in particular groups of consumers in terms of age, gender and spending capacity within a particular time-frame.

### **3.4 POPULATION/TARGET POPULATION**

Population entails the whole group of individuals, events or topics that are of interest to the researcher to investigate (Armstrong and Kotler 2013:110). Likewise, Zikmund and Babin (2013:312) identify population as a group of units a research endeavour seeks to investigate. Target population refers to the amount of individuals with shared characteristics that could be of interest for the purpose of this study (Creswell 2008:47). Target population in this study were all consumers shopping at supermarkets in the greater Durban area. Demographics in terms of age, gender and income were considered as the researcher believed these aspects could influence findings.

### **3.5 SAMPLE SIZE**

A sample population of 400 was envisaged for this study, as it was considered adequate to provide input to determine findings. It is practically impossible to consider every individual in the target population such that a sample will have to be selected. It is imperative that sample size is large enough to enable generalisation of findings to the general population therefore 400 respondents were considered adequate for this research. According to Roscoe (1975 cited by Sekaran and Bougie, 2010) a proper sample size falls between 30 to 500 respondents. Struwig and Stead (2010:120) emphasise that it is vital to standardise sample size with those of similar studies. A sample size of 400 is commendable for a population exceeding 5000 (Ijabadeniyi 2014:63).

### **3.6 SAMPLING METHOD**

According to Kumar (2011:206) sampling refers to a process of choosing an expressive group of participants from a population under study and using information gathered for the research aim. Likewise, Goddard and Melville (2004:34) state that a selected sample refers to a subset of the entire research population. The researcher understood the larger the sample size the more truly reflective it is of the entire population, also the smaller the sampling error. Sekaran and Bougie (2010:296) emphasise that a proper sample size falls between 30 to 500 respondents. Furthermore, they state that a population of 75 000 to 1 000 000 individuals should have a sample size of 382-384 participants. As a result, a sample size of 400 participants was viewed as sufficient to make inferences about the Durban municipal population. According to EtheKwini Municipality (2013:8) the Durban municipal population comprises of 1 679 040 males and 1 763 321 females that is a combined total of 3 442 361 individuals.

Non-probability sampling techniques were applied in this study. Armstrong and Kotler (2013:144) identify this sampling technique as including elements (i.e. respondents) from the population through use of non-statistical measures. Equally, Kumar (2011:206) views non-probability sampling as not being founded on probability during selection of participants from the total population. Furthermore, non-probability sampling can be practised spontaneously to take advantage of participants available. Therefore, convenience sampling was used to ensure easier collection of data, minimise financial expenses and time usage. Gravetter and Forzano (2011:151) state that the main emphasis of convenience sampling is the ease with which the researcher can find participants. Moreover, willingness of consumers to participate in this study was not guaranteed therefore, spreading the range of potential participants increases the researcher's odds of obtaining data.

### **3.7 QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN**

Questionnaires are supposed to be definite (i.e. unambiguous) and designed based on the objectives of the research (Malhotra 2010:336). Bradley (2010:189) adds that questionnaires should be complemented with cover letters that introduce participants to the research project. This study made use of simple and clear cut questions that aimed at answering objectives of this study. The questionnaire comprised of three sections with sub-questions. These three questions addressed demographic variables, customer experience, customer perception and relationship between customer service and consumer buying behaviour. Apart from demographic questions, all other questions addressed the 3 dimensional approach to assess service quality in retail context proposed by Dhurup (2005:140). These questions were sub-divided to cover policy, atmospherics and reliability dimensions of service quality. Overall, the questionnaire design was based on literature related to customer service and consumer behaviour as well as objectives of this study. A cover letter was included to ensure that participants were aware of the kind and purpose of research. In the following sections, an outline of the questionnaire will be discussed.

#### **3.7.1 Questionnaire Format**

Zikmund and Babin (2013:280) advocate the use of structured questionnaires in surveys related to the marketing field. Structured questionnaires were used for this study comprising of closed-ended, multiple choice and scaled response questions. These were used such that respondents were required to state one or more answers from a list of possible choices. These questions were utilised to maximise standardisation of research findings which enabled the researcher to clearly encode data and reduce possibilities of acquiring irrelevant responses (Kamwendo 2014:60). In addition, considering this study's sample size of 400, closed ended questions were considered appropriate in achieving this large number of respondents. Bertram and Christiansen (2014:74) support that closed-ended questions are effective when the researcher is studying a large number of respondents and aims at quantifying information about them as a group.

#### **3.7.2 Measurement and Scaling**

For the purpose of this study, the questionnaire consisted of three sections with sub-questions and included questions measured using a five point Likert scale which ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. According to McLeod (2008:1) the

use of Likert scales have become a common practice in measuring attitudes and gives room to different levels of opinion or no opinion at all. Section one of the questionnaire aimed at understanding consumer profiles in terms of gender, age group, marital status, level of education, monthly grocery spending, family size, distance to closest store and frequency of shopping. These demographic variables were cross tabulated with other variables in the questionnaire to determine relationships.

The second section of the questionnaire was aimed at ascertaining customer perception on service quality. A validated scale proposed by Dhurup, Venter and Oosthuizen (2005:140) was used to measure consumer perception towards service quality. Questions were sub-divided into the three service quality indicators identified by the authors (i.e. Atmospherics, Policy and Reliability). Respondents were required to state their opinion on specified statements across a five point Likert scale. Respondents were informed to state their opinion based on their most recent experience at a supermarket.

At the end of the second section, two questions were included to determine behaviour of consumers based on their current perception of service quality. It is understood that consumer perceptions of service quality lead to continued patronage, defection or referrals. Similarly, Nitzan and Libai (2011:24) confirm that consumers are constantly involved in either positive or negative word of mouth and there is an 80% chance of other consumers defecting due to negative word of mouth. Respondents were questioned whether or not they will continue shopping at the same store and recommend the store to friends or family.

The last section of the questionnaire comprised of an ordinal question that identified aspects crucial in ensuring service quality and respondents were instructed to state their level of importance of each aspect based on their shopping experience.

### **3.8 DATA COLLECTION**

A survey was used to collect the primary data. According to Hawkins, Mothersbaugh and Best (2007:750) surveys are logical ways of collecting data from a reasonably large sample through use of questionnaires. A total of 400 questionnaires were administered to respondents at their households, malls and restaurants. Administering and completion of a questionnaire took 5-10 minutes. Two graduate assistants were used in administering questionnaires and were fully informed about the subject matter

so that they could assist in clarifying questions that arose among respondents. One of these assistants was an IsiZulu speaker that assisted in translating some of the questions to respondents who identified English as a second language to them.

Excluding minors (individuals under the age of 18), prospective participants were randomly approached and informed that their participation was voluntary. Participants were also advised that they were free to return blank questionnaires if they were not willing to participate in the survey.

### **3.9 DATA ANALYSIS**

Once data was collected, analysis thereof was performed to acquire relevant information that solves this study's identified problem. Descriptive statistical methods were applied in analysing data which include graphs, charts, descriptive statistics and suitable inferential statistics. Asadoorian and Kantarelis (2005:2) mention that inferential (inductive) statistics permit researchers to use probability methods to appraise collected data from a specific sample and understand the whole population under study. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 was utilised to analyse the raw data.

### **3.10 VALIDITY**

Zero measurement errors are practically impossible in research however, precautionary measures were implemented to reduce errors. For instance, questionnaires had short, easy to understand questions for respondents. Respondents were informed about the intention of the questionnaire and how to answer it. In addition, a pre-test was conducted to evaluate the applicability of questions utilised in achieving objectives of this study. Kumar (2011:177) suggests that validity revolves around correctness, distinction and accuracy of systems embraced in discovering solutions to research questions. In addition, Phelan and Wren (2009:1) define validity as the degree to which a research measures what is envisioned to be evaluated. In general, validity ensures that surveys or observations are precisely controlled and free of fraud or bias (Bearden, Netemeyer and Haws 2011:6). Questionnaire content for this study was developed based on the research objectives, research literature and findings of academics in the area of customer service and consumer behaviour whose results were empirically validated.

### **3.11 RELIABILITY**

Reliability of a research can be described as the extent to which repetitive measurements carried out produce identical results in similar circumstances as the preceding one. Consequently, it can be summed up that reliability is about consistency, certainty and exactness of results from a research (Leedy and Omrod 2010:93). Malhotra (2010:318) advocates that reliability of a study indicates consistency of data from distinct administrations of a measuring instrument. As mentioned earlier, questions were developed using Dhurup's (2005:140) 3 dimensional approach to measuring service quality in a retail context which had been empirically validated on a number of occasions.

It is understood that the larger the sample the more reliable the findings are, a larger sample of 400 respondents was therefore selected for this study. According to Roscoe (1975 cited by Sekaran and Bougie, 2010) a proper sample size falls between 30 to 500 respondents. Overall, in addressing reliability the study made use of standardised questionnaires and instructions for respondents prior to completion.

### **3.12 PRE-TEST SURVEY**

Prior to collection of data, a pre-test of the questionnaire was conducted to evaluate its effectiveness in measuring the required data. This process ensured the researcher had a clear perspective of what instructions to include in the actual survey as well as to determine questionnaire content and structure. Cooper and Schindler (2014:86) confirm that pre-testing discloses weaknesses in design and instrumentation.

Twenty questionnaires were administered at the Durban University of Technology under typical field conditions. Respondents were randomly selected however, age was considered to ensure that every age group had an equal chance of participating. Findings of this pre-testing exhibited that respondents were not well informed on how to answer the last question; which required them to indicate what is of most importance to them in service quality. Consequently, this question was restructured before initiating actual collection of data.



### **3.13 CONCLUSION**

This chapter discussed the research methodology applied in this study. The research design, approach, sampling procedure and research instrument adopted in this study were reviewed in this chapter. The research design outlines the different approaches used in this study to collect data that provided an insight of how service influences consumer behaviour. Issues of validity and reliability were addressed in this chapter. Validity ensures a measuring tool precisely measures what it should measure on the other hand, reliability advocates consistency of results. Various measures implemented to address these two constructs were discussed in this chapter. Lastly in this chapter, a pilot test was highlighted and the importance thereof in this study.

In the subsequent chapter, findings of the main study will be discussed.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The preceding chapter (i.e. chapter 3) reviewed various research techniques implemented in conducting this study. The intent of this study is to determine the influence of customer service on consumer buying behaviour at selected supermarkets in the greater Durban area. Respectively, this chapter presents the results and discuss the findings obtained from the questionnaires in this study. The questionnaire was the primary tool that was used to collect data. It was distributed to members of the public in the greater area of Durban that included places such as Berea, Musgrave, Durban CBD, Windermere and Gateway. The data collected from the responses was analysed using SPSS version 22. The results will present the descriptive statistics in the form of graphs, cross tabulations and other figures for the quantitative data that was collected. Inferential techniques include the use of correlations and chi square test values; which are interpreted using the p-values.

#### **4.2 THE SAMPLE**

This study targeted a total of 400 responses from supermarket consumers in the greater Durban area. In total, 450 questionnaires were despatched and 399 were returned which gave an 86.67 % response rate.

#### **4.3 THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT**

The research instrument consisted of 44 items, with measurements at a nominal or an ordinal level. The questionnaire was divided into 5 sections which measured various themes as illustrated in Table 4.1.

**TABLE 4.1: Layout of Measuring Instrument**

Question	Section
1	Biographical data.
2.1- 2.13	Atmospherics.
2.14- 2.23	Policy.
2.24- 2.29	Reliability.
3.1- 3.5	Important elements of service quality.

#### **4.4 RELIABILITY STATISTICS**

The two most important aspects of precision are **reliability** and **validity**. Reliability is computed by taking several measurements on the same subject. Welman et al., (2005:147) advocate that consistency checks can be implemented to ascertain how reliable a measuring tool is. These checks involve the use of the Cronbach's coefficient alpha as an extent of an instrument's consistency. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered as "acceptable" (Andrew, Pederson and McEvoy 2011:202). Table 4.2 reflects the Cronbach's alpha score for all the items that constituted the questionnaire.

**TABLE 4.2: Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient (Questionnaire)**

Questions	Section	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
2.1- 2.13	Atmospherics	13 of 13	0.908
2.14- 2.23	Policy	10 of 10	0.893
2.24- 2.29	Reliability	6 of 6	0.831
3.1- 3.5	Important elements of service quality	5 of 5	0.722
<b>Overall</b>		<b>34 of 34</b>	<b>0.921</b>

As depicted in table 4.2, the overall reliability score exceeds the recommended Cronbach's alpha value of 0.700 in all sections. This indicates a degree of acceptable, consistent scoring for the various sections of the research. Each of the individual sections also has high reliability scores. This explains that each construct utilised in each of the sections is of relevance to service quality and buying behaviour of consumers.

#### **4.4.1 Factor Analysis**

Factor analysis is a statistical technique whose main goal is data reduction (Moonsamy and Singh, 2012:5). Mertler and Vannatta (2002:17) assert that factor analysis is used by researchers to investigate fundamental constructs of an instrument or set data. A typical use of factor analysis is in survey research, where a researcher wishes to represent a number of questions with a small number of hypothetical factors. For example, as part of a national survey on political opinions, participants may answer three separate questions regarding environmental policy, reflecting issues at the local, state and national level. Each question, by itself, would be an inadequate measure of attitude towards environmental policy, but together they may provide a better measure of the attitude. Factor analysis can be used to establish whether the three measures do, in fact, measure the same thing. If so, they can then be combined to create a new variable, a factor score variable that contains a score for each respondent on the factor.

Overall, factor analysis is an instrument used to reduce or sub-divide a group of questions in a survey into a smaller group of theoretical factors. The main aim is to validate that a set of questions can be combined to measure unique elements or variables (Moonsamy and Singh 2012:5).

The matrix Tables 4.4 up to 4.7 are preceded by a summarised Table 4.3 that reflects the results of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's Test. The requirement is that Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy should be greater than 0.50 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity less than 0.05. In all instances, the conditions are satisfied which allows for the factor analysis procedure.

Factor analysis is done only for the Likert scale items. Certain components are divided into finer components. This is explained below in the rotated component matrix.

**TABLE 4.3 KMO and Bartlett's Test**

Section	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		
		Approx. Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Atmospherics	0.920	2398.247	78	0.00
Policy	0.913	1811.275	45	0.00
Reliability	0.869	767.630	15	0.00
Most important to Service Quality	0.730	419.783	10	0.00

Based on Table 4.3, all of the conditions are satisfied for factor analysis that is, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy value should be greater than 0.500 and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity sig. value should be less than 0.05.

**TABLE 4.4: Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>**

Atmospherics	Component	
	1	2
The store was well lit	.708	.174
The aisles are always free of clutter	.752	.264
There is sufficient space to wheel a trolley in the aisle	.751	.234
The grocery items are easily classified in each aisle	.784	.293
There is adequate signage to locate products	.640	.389
The signage is clearly visible	.564	.494
The store layout makes it easy to locate items for groceries	.595	.453
The store layout makes it easy to locate items for hardware	.372	.654
The store layout makes it easy to locate items for the Outdoors	.274	.749
The store layout makes it easy to locate clothing items on sale	.250	.710
The store layout makes it easy to locate toys and games on sale	.156	.730
The in store announcements are pleasantly delivered	.373	.582
I am able to shop without unnecessary noise in the store	.208	.538

**TABLE 4.5: Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>**

Policy	Component	
	1	2
This store has convenient shopping hours	.116	.807
This store has a fair return policy	.263	.801
I am able to source out of stock items at sale prices	.352	.654
The store personnel's attitude is always friendly	.705	.307
The cashiers always greet me before proceeding with the transaction	.832	.113
The packers are always friendly	.839	.127
The store has a delivery system which caters to my needs	.741	.279
The store personnel are always neatly dressed in uniform	.658	.361
The store is always visually appealing	.596	.437
Store personnel are always willing to assist	.658	.331

**TABLE 4.6 Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>**

Reliability	Component
	1
The fresh produce is always of a high standard	.650
I am able to locate products that are culturally specific to me	.745
The store ensures good security for my well-being	.756
The products are always fairly priced	.744
Store personnel are knowledgeable about the products in the store	.804
I am able to get sound advice from store personnel if ever I am in doubt	.725

**TABLE 4.7 Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>**

Most important to Service Quality	Component	
	1	2
Quality (of products, store layout)	.034	.822
Accessibility (of store, trolley bays, checkout counters and parking space)	.193	.794
Availability (of store personnel, operational pay points)	.598	.537
Pricing of products and its visibility	.848	.084
Proper signage	.838	.114

Factor analysis is a statistical technique whose main goal is data reduction. A typical use of factor analysis is in survey research, where a researcher wishes to represent a number of questions with a small number of hypothetical factors. With reference to the table above:

- The principle component analysis was used as the extraction method, and the rotation method was Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. This is an orthogonal rotation method that minimizes the number of variables that have high loadings on each factor. It simplifies the interpretation of the factors.
- Factor analysis/loading show inter-correlations between variables.
- Items of questions that loaded similarly imply measurement along a similar factor. An examination of the content of items loading at or above 0.5 (and using the higher or highest loading in instances where items cross-loaded at greater than this value) effectively measured along the various components.

It is noted that the variables that constituted Reliability loaded perfectly along a single component. This means that the statements that constituted this section measures what was meant to be measured. The other 3 sections loaded along 2 components (sub-themes). This means that respondents identified different trends within the section. Within the section, the splits are colour coded yellow or green (i.e. component 1 and 2 respectively).



#### **4.4.2 Section A: Biographical Data**

This section summarises the biographical/demographic characteristics of the sample under study. For the purpose of this study, only a selected number of demographic characteristics relevant to the object of this study were considered. Table 4.8 describes the overall gender distribution by age.

#### 4.4.2.1 Gender Distribution by Age

Table 4.8 below indicates how gender of participants was distributed across a number of age ranges.

		Gender		Total	
		Male	Female		
Age (in years)	18 - 29	Count	102	95	197
		% within Age (in years)	51.8%	48.2%	100.0%
		% within Gender	51.0%	47.7%	49.4%
		% of Total	25.6%	23.8%	49.4%
	30 - 40	Count	61	60	121
		% within Age (in years)	50.4%	49.6%	100.0%
		% within Gender	30.5%	30.2%	30.3%
		% of Total	15.3%	15.0%	30.3%
	41 - 55	Count	27	28	55
		% within Age (in years)	49.1%	50.9%	100.0%
		% within Gender	13.5%	14.1%	13.8%
		% of Total	6.8%	7.0%	13.8%
56 and above	Count	10	16	26	
	% within Age (in years)	38.5%	61.5%	100.0%	
	% within Gender	5.0%	8.0%	6.5%	
	% of Total	2.5%	4.0%	6.5%	
Total	Count	200	199	399	
	% within Age (in years)	50.1%	49.9%	100.0%	
	% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	50.1%	49.9%	100.0%	

**TABLE 4.8: Gender Distribution by Age**

Biographical data of this study revealed an overall 1:1 ratio (i.e. 50.1%:49.9%) between males and females. This defies the general belief that women are predominant shoppers compared to their male counterparts. Likewise, Mitra (2015:3) reports that an estimated 80% of decisions for purchasing foods and grocery products are now handled by men.

A further analysis of the male category indicates that within age ranges of (18-29; 30-40 and 41-55 years), males constituted a major percentage of 50. It can be summed up that young to middle aged men are now heavily involved in buying grocery items. According to a report by Packaged Facts (2015:100), there is a significant shift in household dynamics with females no longer assuming the role of being primary store shoppers rather, men have assumed such a role with a larger weekly frequency compared to females.

Age ranges of (18-29 and 30-40 years) constituted a major combined percentage of 79.7 (i.e. 49.4%+30.3%) of the total sample. This is because this study was mainly conducted in areas close to Durban CBD where young to middle aged people prefer to reside for study or work purposes.

Although men have been identified as equally dominant shoppers to women; the ratio of male shoppers drops starting from the 41-55 age range upwards. The ratio of males to females across these age ranges drops from 1:1 to 0.9:1 then 0.6:1. This might be due to the fact that men generally have shorter life spans compared to females (Fernandez 2005:3).

#### 4.4.2.2 Marital Status of Respondents

Table 4.9 indicates the marital status of the respondents.

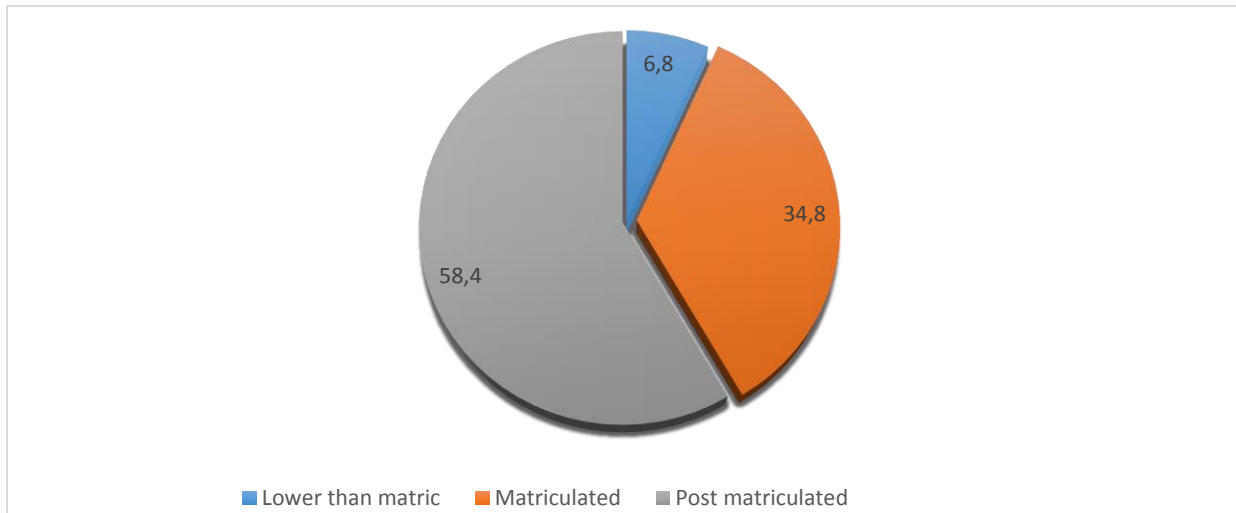
	Frequency	Percent
Single	259	64.9
Married	140	35.1
Total	399	100.0

**TABLE 4.9: Marital Status of Respondents**

Approximately two-thirds of the respondents (64.9%) were single with the balance being married. Despite the data highlighting higher patronage among single

individuals, this does not imply that single people are regular shoppers than married people. This might be attributed to the location where the study was conducted. Richa (2012:48) emphasised that marital status does not have a direct impact on shopping frequency rather it depends on specific needs of individuals. Similarly, Srinivasan, Srivastava and Bhanot (2015:82) point out that there is no relation between marital status and frequency of buying luxury items.

#### 4.4.2.3 Educational Level of Respondents

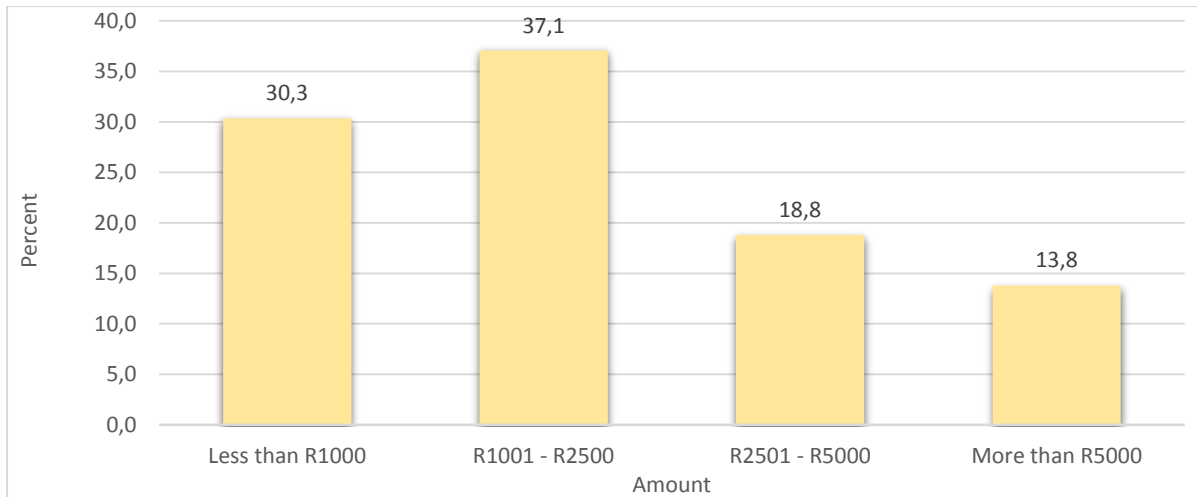


**FIGURE 4.1: Educational Level of Respondents**

The majority of respondents (58.4%) had a post school qualification as depicted by Figure 4.1. Approximately a third of the respondents had at least completed school. A combined 93.2 % (58.4+34.8%) of the sample have at least a matriculation certificate which might imply better spending capacity amongst the majority of the shoppers. In general, better qualifications tend to improve the income base of consumers which is positive for business.

With data being gathered largely from an educated sample, this can be deemed as a useful statistic. This statistic indicates that responses of this study were gathered from an informed (learned) source.

#### 4.4.2.4 Monthly Grocery Spending Patterns of Respondents



**FIGURE 4.2: Average Monthly Grocery Spending Of Respondents**

Figure 4.2 indicates that approximately two-thirds (i.e. 30.3+37.1%) of the respondents spend at most R2500 in a month. This statistic does not correspond with the previous finding that the majority of the sample was educated. Normally better educational qualifications are related to higher spending. However, considering that the sample of this study was largely inclusive of single individuals, family size tends to dictate monthly spending amounts on grocery items.

#### 4.4.2.5 Monthly Spending Patterns Based On Marital Status

		Marital Status		Total
		Single	Married	
Monthly Grocery Spending	Count	110	11	121
	Less than R1000			
	% within Marital Status	42.5%	7.9%	30.3%
	Count	102	46	148
	R1001 - R2500			
	% within Marital Status	39.4%	32.9%	37.1%
	Count	38	37	75
	R2501 - R5000			
% within Marital Status	14.7%	26.4%	18.8%	
Count	9	46	55	
More than R5000				
% within Marital Status	3.5%	32.9%	13.8%	
Count	259	140	399	
Total				
% within Marital Status	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

**TABLE 4.10: Monthly Grocery Spending \* Marital Status Cross-Tabulation**

Table 4.10 depicts a relationship between monthly grocery spending and marital status. From the table, single individuals largely constitute the lower grocery spending bracket not exceeding R2500. A sizeable 81.9% (42.5% +39.4%) of single consumers spend no more than R2500 on groceries monthly compared to 40.8% (7.9+32.9%) of married people. Single people normally assume smaller family sizes compared to married people hence why they spend less on grocery items. Kostakis (2014:25) substantiates that compared to single people, married consumers are highly unlikely to spend lesser on grocery items. It can be summed up that level of grocery expenditure is positively influenced by marital status amongst other factors.

#### 4.4.2.6 Family Size Of Respondents

The family size of the respondents is shown in Table 4.11.

	Frequency	Percentage %
0 - 2 members	139	34.84
3 - 6 members	195	48.87
More than 6 members	65	16.29
Total	399	100

**TABLE 4.11: Family Size of Respondents**

48.87 % (i.e. almost half) of the sample have family members between 3-6 individuals. A combined 65.16% (48.87+16.29%) of the sample have family members above 3, meaning that the majority of this study's sample consisted of shoppers buying for their families and are reasonably involved grocery buying situations.

#### 4.4.2.7 Distance to Closest Store

The distance to the closest store is indicated in Table 4.12.

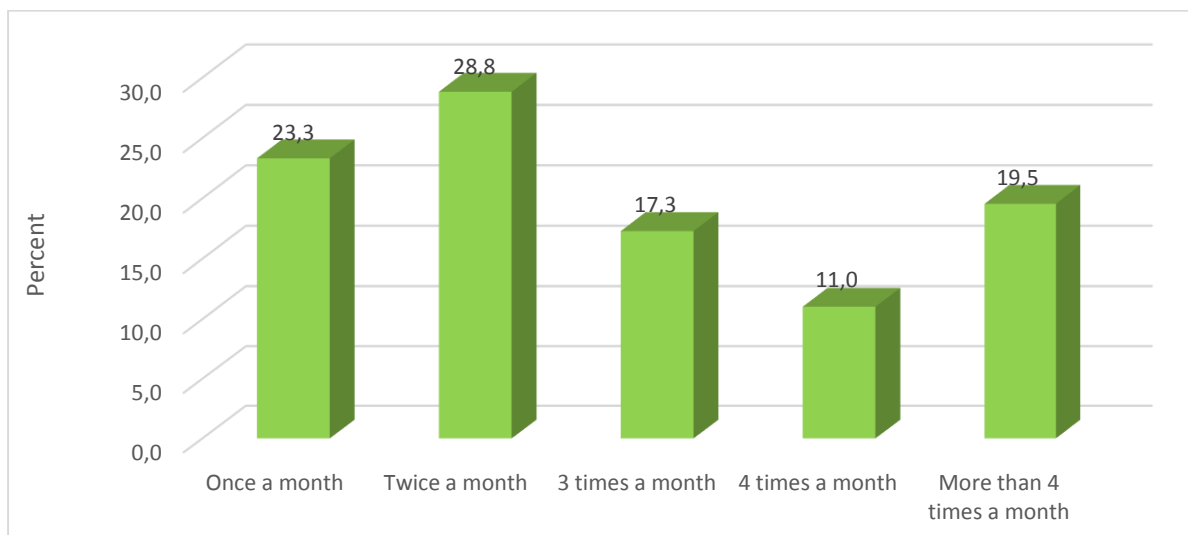
	Frequency	Percentage %
1 km and less	154	38.6
1.01 km - 5 km	173	43.4
5.01 km - 10km	54	13.5
More than 10km	18	4.5
Total	399	100.0

**TABLE 4.12: Distance to Closest Store**

The majority of the sample 82% (38.6+43.4%) shop in supermarkets within a distance of 5km as Table 4.12 illustrates. Despite modern transportation nowadays, this statistic indicates that distance to store has a negative effect on consumer patronage. This statistic reinforces the reason why most online store facilities have thrived in today's modern shopping as consumers continuously seek convenience (Chukwu 2014:63). Distance to store has been identified amongst the three most significant factors affecting store patronage including purchase intention and personal income (Chaiyasoonthorn and Suska-ngiam 2011:520). However, Luceri and Latusi (2010:519) accentuate that nowadays the significance of explaining consumer patronage has diminished because the perceived hindrances of visiting a number of outlets for comparison shopping have decreased. Overall, Schmidt (2015:7) explains that store distance has a larger negative effect on store choice when measured by number of visits to the store than the percentage of budget spent on that particular store.

#### 4.4.2.8 Monthly Shopping Frequency

Figure 4.3 indicates the number of times in a month respondents went shopping.



**FIGURE 4.3: Shopping Frequency in a Month**



Based on Figure 4.3 the majority of the respondents (52.1%) shopped at most twice a month. This statistic could be indicative of lower consumer store patronage which is negative to supermarkets in Durban. However, further analysis on how much is spent per consumer on these few visits is prerequisite before implying any conclusions. Moreover, the majority of this study's sample consisted of single respondents whose grocery shopping requirements might be considered lower compared to married people.

#### 4.4.2.8 Shopping Frequency Based On Marital Status

The frequency of shopping by marital status is shown in Table 4.13.

		Marital Status		Total	
		Single	Married		
How many times in a month do you go shopping?	Once a month	Count	65	28	93
		% within Marital Status	25.1%	20.0%	23.3%
	Twice a month	Count	75	40	115
		% within Marital Status	29.0%	28.6%	28.8%
	3 times a month	Count	44	25	69
		% within Marital Status	17.0%	17.9%	17.3%
	4 times a month	Count	23	21	44
		% within Marital Status	8.9%	15.0%	11.0%
	More than 4 times a month	Count	52	26	78
		% within Marital Status	20.1%	18.6%	19.5%
	Total	Count	259	140	399
		% within Marital Status	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

**TABLE 4.13: Frequency of Shopping By Marital Status**

From Table 4.13, the majority of single consumers (54.1%) visit supermarkets not more than twice a month. On the other hand, 51.5% of married consumers shop more than twice in a month. Shopping requirements for single individuals are lower than their

married counterparts due to smaller household composition. Similarly, Nambiar (2015:3) reveals that household composition is a significant factor amongst others that influence shopping frequency.

#### **4.5 SECTION ANALYSIS**

The section that follows analyses the scoring patterns of the respondents per variable per section. Where applicable, levels of disagreement (negative statements) were collapsed to show a single category of “Disagree”. A similar procedure was followed for the levels of agreement (positive statements).

The results are first presented using summarised percentages for the variables that constitute each section. Results are then further analysed according to the importance of the statements.

##### **4.5.1 Question 2: Service Quality Indicators**

This section of the questionnaire deals with elements of customer service that may influence buying behaviour of consumers. It measures levels of perception of consumers regarding service quality and their experience during service encounters. This section was developed from an established instrument proposed and tested by Dhurup (2005:140). It consists of questions covering atmospherics, policy and reliability dimensions of service quality

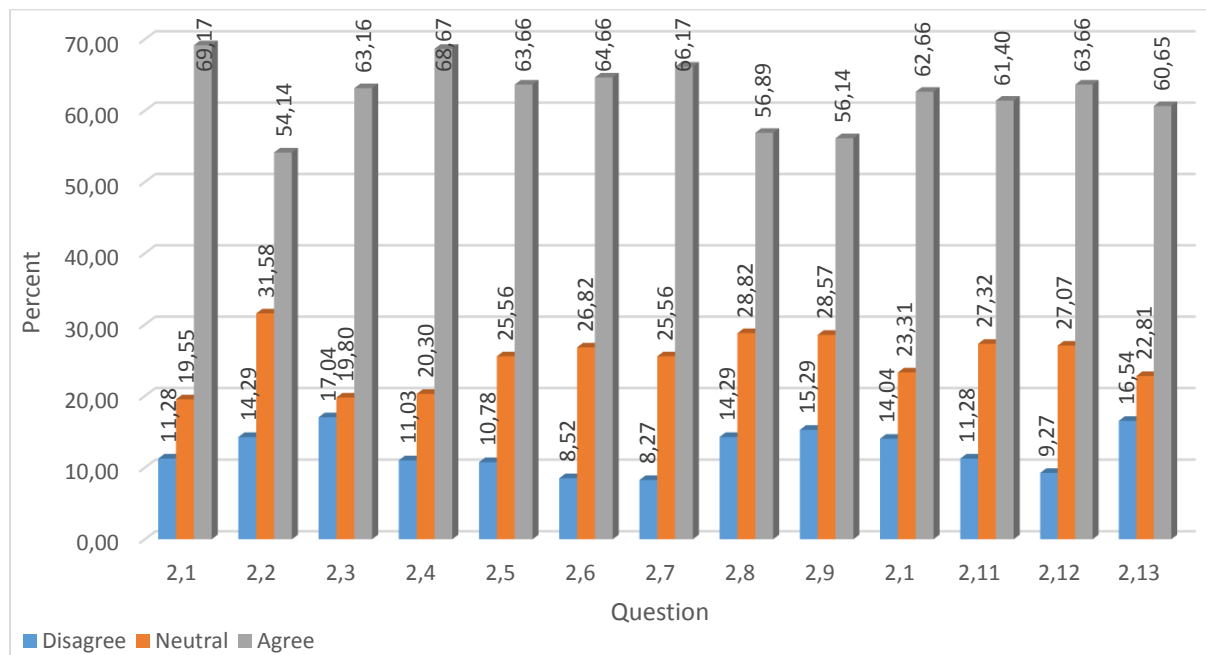
###### **4.5.1.1 Atmospherics**

This section ascertains consumer perception and experience of service delivered in supermarkets. In this category, only statements that fall under the atmospherics category of service quality as suggested by Dhurup (2005:140) were considered. Table 4.14 summarises the scoring patterns.

**TABLE 4.14: Percentage Scoring Patterns (Atmospherics)**

		Disagree		Neutral		Agree	
		Cou nt	Row N %	Cou nt	Row N %	Cou nt	Row N %
The store was well lit	2.1	45	11.3%	78	19.5%	276	69.2%
The aisles are always free of clutter	2.2	57	14.3%	126	31.6%	216	54.1%
There is sufficient space to wheel a trolley in the aisle	2.3	68	17.0%	79	19.8%	252	63.2%
The grocery items are easily classified in each aisle	2.4	44	11.0%	81	20.3%	274	68.7%
There is adequate signage to locate products	2.5	43	10.8%	102	25.6%	254	63.7%
The signage is clearly visible	2.6	34	8.5%	107	26.8%	258	64.7%
The store layout makes it easy to locate items for groceries	2.7	33	8.3%	102	25.6%	264	66.2%
The store layout makes it easy to locate items for hardware	2.8	57	14.3%	115	28.8%	227	56.9%
The store layout makes it easy to locate items for the Outdoors	2.9	61	15.3%	114	28.6%	224	56.1%
The store layout makes it easy to locate clothing items on sale	2.10	56	14.0%	93	23.3%	250	62.7%
The store layout makes it easy to locate toys and games on sale	2.11	45	11.3%	109	27.3%	245	61.4%
The in store announcements are pleasantly delivered	2.12	37	9.3%	108	27.1%	254	63.7%
I am able to shop without unnecessary noise in the store	2.13	66	16.5%	91	22.8%	242	60.7%

**FIGURE 4.4: Percentage Scoring Patterns (Atmospherics)**



Based on Table 4.14 and Figure 4.4, the highest levels of agreement (positive statements) were in question **2.1** ‘The store was well lit’ and **2.4** ‘The grocery items are easily classified in each aisle’. These attributes positively contribute to consumers’ ease of access to products within the store. It therefore means that consumers find it relatively easy to locate product items within supermarkets. In today’s age, where consumers are pressed for time and consistently seeking convenience, ease of access to products can therefore positively contribute to business performance as consumer needs are met. Aaker et al., (2015:394) substantiate that consumers are often pressed for time due to their subjective perception of conflicting goals. The average level of agreement for this section is 62.39%.

Statements **2.8** and **2.2** (‘The store layout makes it easy to locate items for hardware’ and ‘The aisles are always free of clutter’) recorded the highest level of uncertainty of 28.82% and 31.58% respectively. For statement **2.8**, the result might be attributed to the fact that a considerable number of this study’s respondents conduct their shopping in smaller, low scale supermarkets like Jwayelani, Check-out and Shoprite U-Save. These supermarkets offer narrow product lines therefore patrons of such outlets did not understand the concept of stocking hardware items in a supermarket. An uncertainty level of 31.78% of the respondents on statement **2.2** implies that the shoppers are not certain whether or not the supermarkets they visit uphold cleanliness. A further analysis of question **2.2** indicates that it ranks the lowest level of agreement

(54.1%) amongst other questions within this section. This indicates that there are a number of supermarkets in Durban that are not providing expected clean shopping environments.

The highest level of disagreement (17.04%) is noted in statement **2.3** 'There is sufficient space to wheel a trolley in the aisle'. This indicates that consumer convenience when shopping is jeopardised in some supermarkets. Larson (2006:108) suggests that as part of aisle management, aisles have to be wide enough to avoid customers bumping into each other and encourage shopper traffic. Furthermore, literature insinuates that floor space contributes to how long a shopper spends in a store and even entices consumers to buy (Tlapaná 2009:72).

However, for all statements that questioned the consumer's ease of movement throughout the store (i.e. 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, and 2.7) highest levels of agreement were scored averaging 65.95%. This indicates that the majority of supermarkets in Durban are currently maintaining in-store shopper convenience .

The following patterns are observed in this category:

- Most statements show (significantly) higher levels of agreement whilst other levels of agreement are lower (but still greater than levels of disagreement).
- Approximately a quarter of the respondents (25.12%) were neutral/uncertain in the scoring patterns because they identified different trends or simply did not comprehend well with certain statements.
- Factor analysis on this section loaded across two sub-themes on a number of statements starting from 2.8-2.13. This means that consumers identified different inclinations on these statements. For instance, statements such as 'The store layout makes it easy to locate items for hardware', 'The store layout makes it easy to locate items for the outdoors' and 'The store layout makes it easy to locate clothing items on sale'; respondents were mostly uncertain. Traditionally supermarkets do not stock these items (hardware, outdoor and clothing), secondly consumers shopping at low scale supermarkets that stock narrow product lines could not understand these statements resulting in higher levels of uncertainty and a factor loading across two sub-themes.

The significance of the differences is tested in Table 4.15.

To determine whether the scoring patterns per statement were significantly different per option, a chi square test was done. The null hypothesis claims that similar numbers of respondents scored across each option for each statement (one statement at a time). The alternate states that there is a significant difference between the levels of agreement and disagreement. The results are shown in Table 4.15.

**TABLE 4.15: Chi-Square Test**

	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.
	234.722	2	.000
The aisles are always free of clutter	95.594	2	.000
There is sufficient space to wheel a trolley in the aisle	160.165	2	.000
The grocery items are easily classified in each aisle	229.368	2	.000
There is adequate signage to locate products	178.211	2	.000
The signage is clearly visible	196.256	2	.000
The store layout makes it easy to locate items for groceries	211.444	2	.000
The store layout makes it easy to locate items for hardware	112.301	2	.000
The store layout makes it easy to locate items for the Outdoors	103.955	2	.000
The store layout makes it easy to locate clothing items on sale	159.534	2	.000
The store layout makes it easy to locate toys and games on sale	156.872	2	.000
The in store announcements are pleasantly delivered	184.075	2	.000
I am able to shop without unnecessary noise in the store	136.346	2	.000

The highlighted sig. values (p-values) are less than 0.05 (i.e. the level of significance), it implies that the distributions were not similar. In other words, the differences between the way respondents scored (agree, neutral, disagree) were significant.

#### **4.5.1.2 Policy**

This section investigates the perception and experience of consumers in a store setting. Questions/statements that constitute store policy and developed by Dhurup (2005:140) were utilised in ascertaining consumer perception/experience of service. 10 questions were formulated in this section.

**TABLE 4.15: Percentage Scoring Patterns (Policy)**

		Disagree		Neutral		Agree	
		Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
This store has convenient shopping hours	2.14	32	8.0%	68	17.0%	299	74.9%
This store has a fair return policy	2.15	43	10.8%	115	28.8%	241	60.4%
I am able to source out of stock items at sale prices	2.16	48	12.0%	134	33.6%	217	54.4%
The store personnel's attitude is always friendly	2.17	46	11.5%	114	28.6%	239	59.9%
The cashiers always greet me before proceeding with the transaction	2.18	59	14.8%	96	24.1%	244	61.2%
The packers are always friendly	2.19	48	12.0%	100	25.1%	251	62.9%
The store has a delivery system which caters to my needs	2.2	53	13.3%	93	23.3%	253	63.4%
The store personnel are always neatly dressed in uniform	2.21	35	8.8%	73	18.3%	291	72.9%
The store is always visually appealing	2.22	21	5.3%	104	26.1%	274	68.7%
Store personnel are always willing to assist	2.23	42	10.5%	81	20.3%	276	69.2%

**FIGURE 4.5: Percentage Scoring Patterns (Policy)**

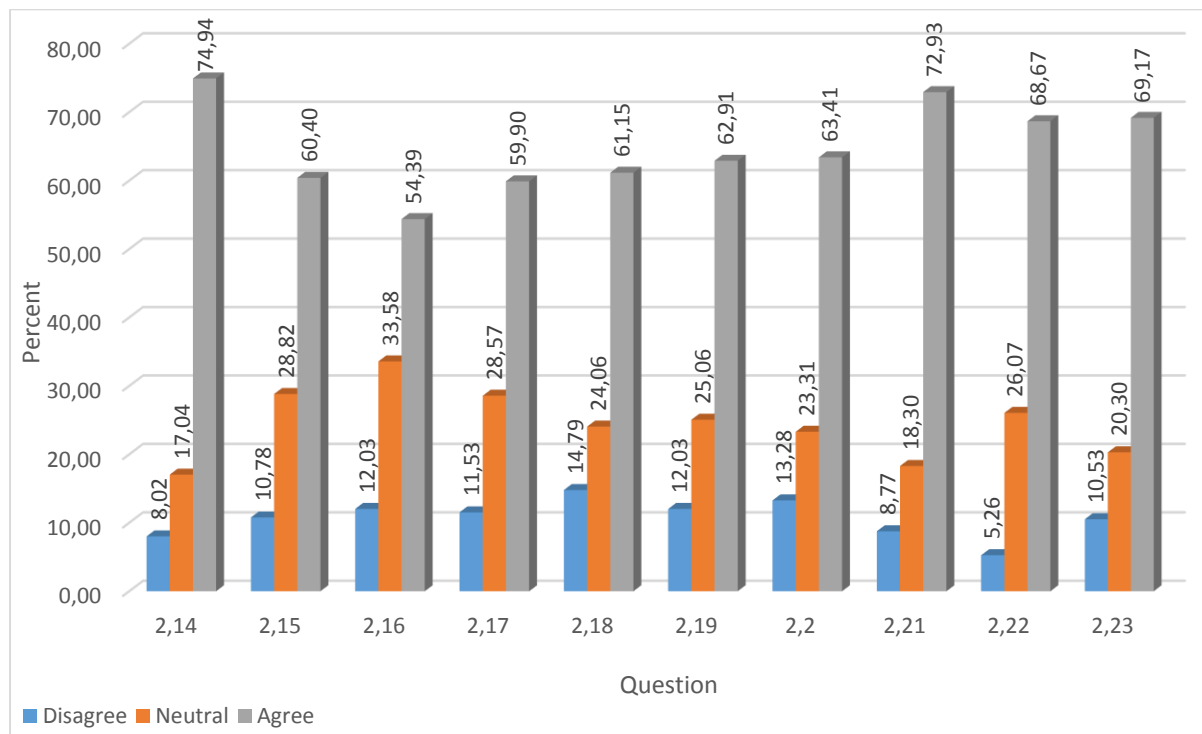


Table 4.15 and Figure 4.5 indicate an average level of agreement of 64.79%. Greatest levels of agreement are noted in statements **2.14** and **2.21** (74.94% and 72.93% respectively). Statement 2.14 ‘This store has convenient shopping hours’ scored positively at rate of 74.94% meaning that the majority consumers are satisfied with trading hours at most supermarkets. Convenient shopping hours are positive for business performance as shopper traffic is spread across longer hours of trading hence no downtime and increased probability of higher sales. On the other hand, for consumers longer trading hours provide them some reasonable convenience to visit supermarkets. Equally, Prinsloo (2014:12) reports that extension of trading hours has become the norm across a majority of shopping centres in South Africa, with most extending to 18:00 and even 20:00 hours.

Statement 2.1 ‘The store personnel are always neatly dressed in uniform’ also recorded a high level of agreement (72.9%). The majority of respondents indicate that store employees are always presentable which is positive for business performance. Store employees are representatives of the company therefore a neat appearance conveys a positive message to shoppers about their professionalism.

Questions 2.14 and 2.22 have the highest levels of agreement than disagreement. 68.67% of shoppers agreed that they find the stores visually appealing (Question 2.22)



compared to a minor 5.26% who disagreed. It indicates that the majority of supermarkets in Durban are adhering to the idea of attracting consumers through offering a pleasant shopping environment visually. Kaur (2013:247) emphasises that visual merchandising attracts shoppers to displayed items and enhances shopping experience. Furthermore, it is inclusive of techniques such as graphics, signage, layout, aisle management and props.

Statement 2.15 ('This store has a fair return policy') has one of the highest level of disagreement and uncertainty (10.78% and 28.82% respectively). The result implies that 10.78% and 28.82% of the investigated shoppers are either in opposition or unsure of the existence of fair return policies in supermarkets. These percentages can be alarming as they indicate a violation of the Consumer Protection Act (CPA) of 2008 in South Africa that fosters a marketplace saturated with fairness, accessibility and sustainability of consumer products/services to ensure consumer protection (South African Government 2009:2).

The lowest level of agreement (54.39%) was recorded in question 2.16 'I am able to source out of stock items at sale prices'. 33.58% of respondents were unsure while 12.03% disagreed that they can source sold out items at sale prices in supermarkets. This lower level of agreement indicates that the probability of not acquiring out of stock items that are on sale is fairly large in supermarkets. This explains why the phrase 'while stocks last' has been a norm in the retail sector. Stock-outs on sale items endanger the retailer's level of being reliable to deliver what has been advertised. Castleberry and Davis (2011:90) report that both short and long run consequences can be suffered by manufacturers and resellers of sold out brands. In the short run, sales are being lost as a result of the unavailability of the product whereas in the long deterioration of loyalty has been noticed as consumers switch to other brands.

Figure 4.5 indicates that question 2.18 'The cashiers always greet me before proceeding with the transaction' recorded the highest level of disagreement at 14.79%. This implies a fair number of shoppers in Durban notice an unfriendly behaviour amongst store personnel which can weaken patronage to specific stores. Labelled 'people turnoffs', an inapt behaviour of store employees tends to turn off or drive away customers (Timm 2008:116).

To ascertain whether differences in responses given were substantial, a chi-square test was performed per variable (statement) as depicted in Table 4.16.

**TABLE 4.16: Chi-Square Test**

	Chi-square	Dif	Asymp Sig
This store has convenient shopping hours	315,654	2	,000
This store has a fair return policy	151,038	2	,000
I am able to source out of stock items at sale prices	107,383	2	,000
The store personnel's attitude is always friendly	144,105	2	,000
The cashiers always greet me before proceeding with the transaction	144,105	2	,000
The packers are always friendly	167,203	2	,000
The store has a delivery system which caters to my needs	168,421	2	,000
The store personnel are always neatly dressed in uniform	286,977	2	,000
The store is always visually appealing	250,12	2	,000
Store personnel are always willing to assist	236,346	2	,000

The highlighted p-values in Table 4.16 are all less than 0.05. This indicates that all the distributions within this section were dissimilar. Responses among agree, neutral and disagree illustrate an ideal difference.

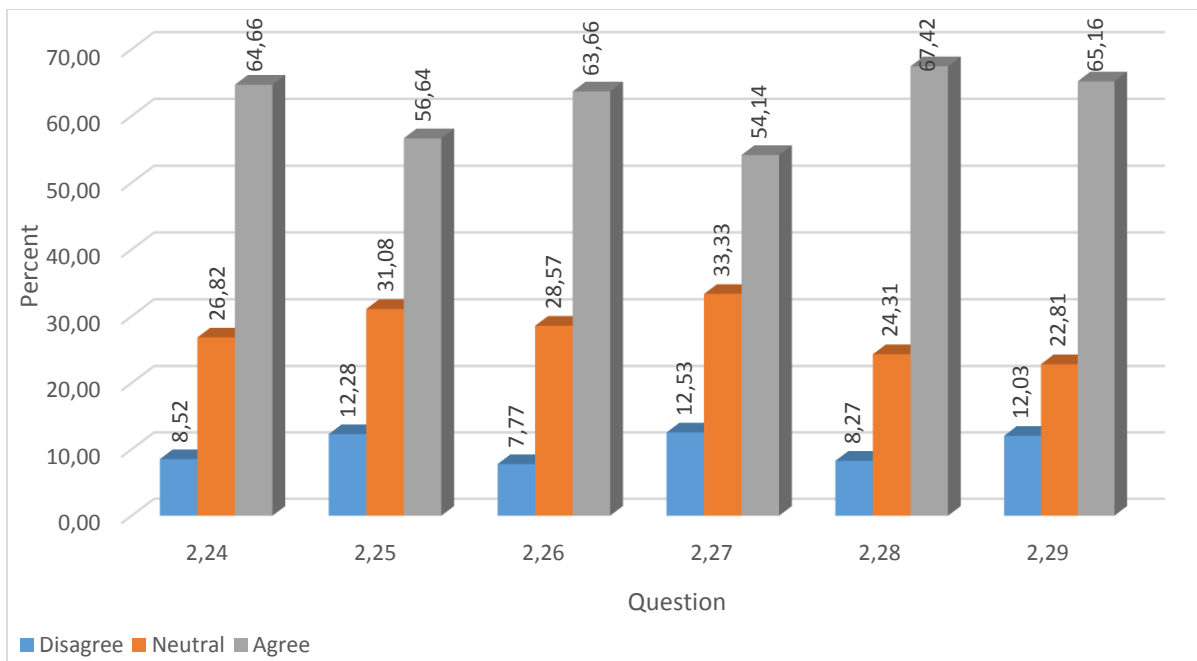
#### **4.5.1.3 Reliability**

In this section, perceptions and experiences of shoppers are investigated with regards to issues/elements related to reliability of a supermarket. Questions were developed based on Dhurup's (2005:140) findings of elements crucial in measuring quality of service.

**TABLE 4.17: Percentage Scoring Patterns (Reliability)**

	Question	Disagree		Neutral		Agree	
		Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
The fresh produce is always of a high standard	2.24	34	8.5%	107	26.8%	258	64.7%
I am able to locate products that are culturally specific to me	2.25	49	12.3%	124	31.1%	226	56.6%
The store ensures good security for my well-being	2.26	31	7.8%	114	28.6%	254	63.7%
The products are always fairly priced	2.27	50	12.5%	133	33.3%	216	54.1%
Store personnel are knowledgeable about the products in the store	2.28	33	8.3%	97	24.3%	269	67.4%
I am able to get sound advice from store personnel if ever I am in doubt	2.29	48	12.0%	91	22.8%	260	65.2%

**FIGURE 4.6: Percentage Scoring Patterns (Reliability)**



Based on Table 4.17 and Figure 4.6 the average level of agreement is 61.95%. The highest level of agreement is identified in question **2.28** ('Store personnel are

knowledgeable about the products in the store') at 67.42%. It implies that the majority of the respondents are satisfied with the store employees' level of product knowledge. This statistic insinuates that consumers are convinced that store employees have adequate product knowledge in terms of where the products are placed, how they can be used and their pricing or possible substitutes. Product knowledge amongst store personnel is important as it instils confidence in consumers, builds customer relationship and trust. Equally, van Scheers (2015:191) reports that South African consumers value salespeople's product knowledge and also make purchase decisions based on this excellent knowledge.

Based on Figure 4.6 the lowest level of agreement is indicated on question 2.27 ('The products are fairly priced') at 54.14%. The same question recorded the highest level of uncertainty (33.33%) amongst respondents. The level of disagreement is at 12.53% which is the highest within this section. It implies that a fairly large number of consumers selected in this study are satisfied with price levels at most supermarkets. On the same note, 30% are unsure whether prices are fair or not. Despite the majority content with supermarket prices, the minority (12.53%) find the prices unreasonable. This might be emanating from lower income levels amongst other consumers or the rising exchange rate against the US dollar making imports expensive for supermarkets hence increased food prices.

The lowest level of disagreement is indicated in question 2.26 ('The store ensures good security for my well-being') at 7.77%. It implies that the majority of shoppers find supermarkets as secure places to trade. This statistic (lowest level of disagreement) complements the increased security features in retail stores like the increased use of CCTV cameras or biometrics technology to verify identity.

The preceding static indicated that a fairly large proportion of consumers are satisfied with store employee product knowledge. Similarly, question 2.29 (' I am able to get sound advice from store personnel if ever I am in doubt') scored high at 65.16% reaffirming that store personnel at most Durban supermarkets are well aware of what they stock and are capable of rightly advising shoppers whenever they are in need.

Question 2.24 recorded amongst the highest levels of agreement in this section at 64.7%. It indicates that the majority of consumers in Durban are satisfied with the level of produce freshness and quality offered in supermarkets. This statistic is consistent

with the findings by the Nielsen Company (2013:15) which reports that there is great emphasis on fresh produce in supermarkets globally as these contribute 29% of total store sales. Similarly, Felsted (2012:5) proposes that today's supermarkets have maintained their focus on fresh produce in a bid to differentiate themselves from competitors.

Statement 2.25 ('I am able to locate products that are culturally specific to me') recorded an average percentage of 56.6%. A significant combined total of 43.4% (12.3%+31.1%) of the respondents either disagreed or were sceptical that they easily locate products that reflect their culture in supermarkets. Rani (2014:53) underscores that culture is vital in determining needs and behaviours of individuals. It therefore indicates the importance of stocking products that reflect the target market's culture to ensure needs are satisfied.

A chi-square test was run per variable within this section as depicted in Table 4.18. This test was performed to establish that significant differences were available across response options per variable.

**TABLE 4.18: Chi-Square Test**

	<b>Chi-square</b>	<b>Dif</b>	<b>Asymp Sig</b>
The fresh produce is always of a high standard	196,256	2	,000
I am able to locate products that are culturally specific to me	118,692	2	,000
The store ensures good security for my well-being	191,023	2	,000
The products are always fairly priced	103,594	2	,000
Store personnel are knowledgeable about the products in the store	224	2	,000
I am able to get sound advice from store personnel if ever I am in doubt	188,857	2	,000

The highlighted p-values in Table 4.18 indicate scores below 0.05. This implies that distributions of responses per option in this section were not similar.

Table 4.19 indicates the responses based on the shopping experience of the respondents.

**TABLE 4.19: Percentage Scoring Patterns Based On Shopping Experience**

	Yes	No
Would you continue shopping at the same supermarket?	91.7%	8.3%
Would you recommend this supermarket to family or friends?	85.5%	14.5%

Based on Table 4.19, both questions scored high levels of agreement. First question ('would you continue shopping at the same supermarket') recorded a 91.7% level of agreement amongst respondents. Based on the responses of preceding sections of the questionnaire, the majority of consumers favourably responded to various statements on service quality (atmospherics, policy and reliability). This finding indicates that if consumers favourably perceive service quality elements offered by a store, there is high likelihood of them continuing with that same store (i.e. they remain loyal to that particular store). This finding reflects literature explored in Chapter 2. Terblanche et al., (2013:256) point out that reliable service gathers significant benefits for the retailer but most importantly customer retention.

Second question ('would you recommend this supermarket to family or friends'). A considerable 85.5% of the respondents indicated that they would recommend particular supermarkets to family and friends. Chapter 2 of this study emphasised the importance of delivering high quality service to ensure positive word of mouth is spread. This statistic reflects with Levy and Weitz (2012:506) proposition that a consumer tells an average of four people about previous experience of service rendered at an outlet.

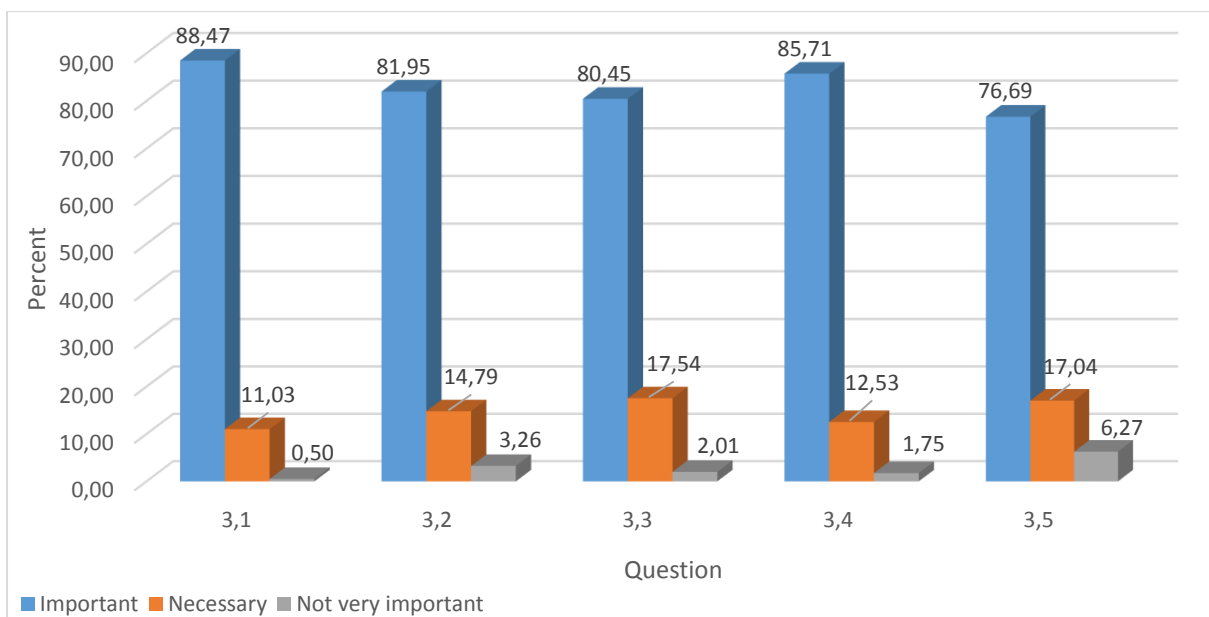
#### 4.5.2 Essentials to service quality

The last section (i.e. question 3) of the questionnaire examined what consumers value most from predetermined options that are essential to ensure service quality is rendered.

**TABLE 4.20: Percentage Scoring Patterns (Question 3)**

	Question	Important		Necessary		Not very important	
		Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
Quality (of products, store layout)	3.1	353	88.5%	44	11.0%	2	.5%
Accessibility (of store, trolley bays, checkout counters and parking space)	3.2	327	82.0%	59	14.8%	13	3.3%
Availability (of store personnel, operational pay points)	3.3	321	80.5%	70	17.5%	8	2.0%
Pricing of products and its visibility	3.4	342	85.7%	50	12.5%	7	1.8%
Proper signage	3.5	306	76.7%	68	17.0%	25	6.3%

**FIGURE 4.7: Percentage Scoring Patterns (Question 3)**



Based on Table 4.20 and Figure 4.7, 88.5% of respondents confirm that quality of products and store layout are important to service quality. This level of scoring indicates the highest level of importance placed on an attribute of service quality compared to the other four mentioned attributes in this section. It implies that consumers place great value on the quality of grocery items offered and layout a supermarket upholds in evaluating level of service quality. Equally, Jahanshahi et al., (2011:253) confirm that there is a highly significant correlation amongst product quality, consumer satisfaction and loyalty.

A combined total of 99.5% (88.5+11%) of shoppers identified product quality and store layout as prerequisites in ensuring service quality in a supermarket. Product quality ensures consumers gain value in their purchases leading to satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is the result or end product of service quality which links product quality to service quality as reported by Jahanshahi et al., (2011:253). On the same note, store layout is an essential determinant towards creation of store image. Properly designed layouts stimulate shopper traffic as part of service quality (Tlapan 2009:4).

In question 3.2, 82% of respondents view accessibility (of store, trolley bays, checkout counters and parking space) as important in ensuring service quality. A combined 96.8% (82+14.8%) of consumers confirmed accessibility as a requirement to foster service quality in supermarkets. Literature confirms how crucial accessibility is in retailing in achieving customer satisfaction, maximising shopper traffic and building loyalty (Swoboda et al 2013:251). Store accessibility poses direct and indirect influence on store performance by building consumer perceptions of superior or poor service quality (Tlapan 2009:41).

A total of 97.5% (80.5+17.5%) of investigated consumers in Durban identified availability of (store personnel, operational pay points) as necessities to service quality. This implies that the higher the availability of store employees to assist consumers the greater the probability that consumers perceive favourably towards the store. Availability of store personnel is of paramount importance as consumers are continually pressed for time nowadays.



Pricing of products and its visibility were considered as vital attributes of service quality by respondents in this study. Results indicate that 85.7% of shoppers considered in this investigation identify product pricing and visibility thereof is important to service quality. Furthermore, a joint 98.2% (85.7+12.5%) of consumers indicate that these attributes are necessities. Modern day consumers seek value for money (i.e. fair pricing) as one of the indications of service quality. Likewise, Prasad and Aryasri (2011:68) report of adoption of 'value for money and time' amongst consumers leading to a shift in their buying orientation and behaviour towards choices of food and store formats. Pricing visibility is equally important as it induces consumer convenience in store. It explains why retail giants like Pick and Pay and SPAR have advanced their pricing techniques to digital price labels or aisle bar code scanners for consumers that show product prices.

Results from Figure 4.7 illustrate that proper signage in a supermarket is an important attribute of service quality as 76.7% of respondents correspond. A combined 93.7% (73.7+17%) of consumers investigated in this study render proper signage as a necessity to ensure service quality. Consumers seek convenience in locating product items in a supermarket with failure to do so leading to dissatisfaction or eventually defection.

The following findings are observed in this section:

- All of the attributes are deemed important to service quality by respondents.
- An average level of high importance was 82.66%. The lowest level importance is indicated in statement 3.5 (Is proper signage important?) with 76.7% of respondents concurring. This lower static might be emanating from the fact that patrons become used to product placement in certain stores that they would not require signage to direct them throughout the store.

Chi-square results for this section indicated in Table 4.21 reveal that differences among response options per variable were significant.

**TABLE 4.21: Chi-Square Test**

	Chi-square	df	Asymp. Sig
Quality (of products, store layout)	552,496	2	,000
Accessibility (of store, trolley bays, checkout counters and parking space)	432,421	2	,000
Availability (of store personnel, operational pay points)	413,068	2	,000
Pricing of products and its visibility	499,594	2	,000
Proper signage	344,496	2	,000

#### 4.6 HYPOTHESIS TESTING

The traditional approach to reporting a result requires a statement of statistical significance. A **p-value** is generated from a **test statistic**. A significant result is indicated with " $p < 0.05$ ". These values are highlighted with a \*.

A second Chi square test was performed to determine whether there was a statistically significant relationship between the variables (rows vs columns). The null hypothesis states that there is no association between the two while the alternate hypothesis indicates that there is an association. Table 4.22 summarises the results of the chi square tests. The complete results of the test can be obtained in Appendix 3.

**TABLE 4.22: Pearson Chi-Square Test**

	Education	Monthly grocery spending	Distance to closest store	How many times in a month do you go shopping
The store was well lit	0.558	0.560	0.504	0.000*
The aisles were always free of clutter	0.162	0.65	0.619	0.001*
There is sufficient space to wheel a trolley in the aisle	0.331	0.781	0.131	0.000*
The grocery items are easily classified in each aisle.	0.040*	0.260	0.009*	0.039*
There is adequate signage to locate products.	0.157	0.08*	0.572	0.337
The store layout makes it easy to locate clothing items on sale	0.317	0.929	0.331	0.005*

I am able to shop without unnecessary noise in the store	0.236	0.018*	0.475	0.406
The store has convenient shopping hours	0.025*	0.427	0.035*	0.013*
The store has a fair return policy	0.000*	0.506	0.230	0.019*
The store personnel's attitude is always friendly	0.017*	0.357	0.107	0.223
The store ensures good security for my well-being	0.327	0.406	0.660	0.001*
Continue shopping at the same supermarket	0.441	0.262	0.013*	0.953
Quality (of products, store layout)	0.034*	0.309	0.327	0.445
Proper signage	0.006*	0.175	0.082	0.013*

The results from the chi-square test (Table 4.22) indicate that a number of noteworthy relationships exist between consumer biographical data and some of this study's statements.

Chi-square results postulate that store lighting determines shopping frequency of a consumer at a particular store. A p-value of 0.000 is indicated between the statements 'The store was well lit' and 'How many times in a month do you go shopping'. This implies a significant relationship between the two variables to reject the null hypothesis. A cross-tabulation reflected in Appendix 4.1 on the variables insinuates that well lit stores increase shopping frequency. Furthermore, of the respondents that agreed to the statement 'The store was well lit'; the percentage difference between the level of agreement and disagreement tends to increase with increased shopping frequency with the level of agreement percentage at high always.

A significant relationship also exists between shopping frequency and store hygiene. Results from the chi-square test indicate a p-value of 0.001. This implies that store hygiene determines shopping frequency of consumers. Cross-tabulation between statements 'The aisles are always free of clutter' and 'How many times in a month do you go shopping' (Appendix 4.2) reveals that the percentage level of agreement to the statement 'The aisles are always free of clutter' increase with the times a shopper visits the store. In general, shoppers regularly visiting a store indicated that the store was hygienic more than those who infrequently visit. This implies that a favourable

perception by a customer towards hygienic practices upheld by a store the more likely that particular customer is to be regular customer.

Moreover, a meaningful relationship exists between shopping frequency and aisle space. Test results specify a p-value of 0.000 between variables 'There is sufficient space to wheel a trolley in the aisle' and 'How many times in a month do you go shopping'. Cross-tabulation between these two variables further indicates that the level of agreement to the statement ('There is sufficient space to wheel a trolley in the aisle') increases with increased shopping frequency. It infers that a positive perception towards store aisle management by customers the more likely they are to be regular shoppers with that specific outlet.

Findings suggest a significant relationship between grocery classification within aisles and consumer education. A p-value of 0.040 is recorded. Cross-tabulation in Appendix 4.3 between statement 'The grocery items are easily classified in each aisle' and education indicates an increase in the level of agreement to the statement as the level of education increases. This implies that consumers possessing higher educational qualifications comprehend better on how grocery items are organised in a supermarket.

In addition, a significant relationship is noted between grocery classification and shopping frequency. A p-value of 0.039 is generated from the chi-square test between statements 'The grocery items are easily classified in each aisle' and 'How many times in a month do you go shopping'. Cross-tabulations on these variables indicate percentage differences between level of agreement and disagreement to statement (The grocery items are easily classified in each aisle) increasing (with level of agreement always higher) as shopping frequency increases. In general, frequent shoppers agreed more that grocery items are easily classified than infrequent shoppers. This might be emanating from the fact that regular shoppers become accustomed to grocery classification in a supermarket than infrequent shoppers which may positively contribute to their level of store loyalty.

Chi-square tests report a p-value of 0.008 between variables 'There is adequate signage to locate products' and 'Monthly grocery spending'. This indicates significant relationship between the two variables to reject the null hypothesis (i.e. there is no association between the two variables). Furthermore, cross-tabulations (Appendix 4.5)

between the two variables show increasing levels of agreement to the statement ('There is adequate signage to locate products') as monthly grocery spending increases up to 72.7% for spending above R5000. This suggests a directly proportional relationship between monthly grocery spending and sufficient signage for consumers to locate items.

According to findings, a noteworthy relationship exists between shopping frequency and ease to locate clothing items on sale. A p-value of 0.005 is reported by the chi-square test. In addition, a cross-tabulation between statement 'The store layout makes it easy to locate clothing items on sale' and shopping frequency reveals increasing levels of agreement to statement 2.10 of the questionnaire as shopping frequency increases (refer to Appendix 4.6). This indicates that convenience in locating grocery items in a supermarket positively influences shopping frequency or store loyalty.

A relationship exists between monthly grocery spending and a reasonably quiet store environment. Results indicate a p-value of 0.018 deemed significant to reject null hypothesis. Further analysis in form of a cross-tabulation between statement ('I am able to shop without unnecessary noise in the store') and monthly grocery spending indicates higher levels of agreement with increased grocery spending (refer to Appendix 4.7). This implies that consumers that perceive a relaxed, quiet store environment are induced to spend more in that particular shop.

The statement (2.14) 'The store has convenient shopping hours' has an association with education, distance to closest store and shopping frequency. A p-value of 0.035 was generated between trading hours and distance to store. Cross-tabulation between these two variables indicates a falling level of agreement as distance to store increases (refer to Appendix 4.8). This emanates from the fact that consumers residing more than 5km from the preferred store are likely to find trading hours inflexible due to the time they spend travelling to the store. A significant p-value of 0.025 was recorded between convenience of trading hours and education of consumers. Cross-tabulation results reveal an increasing level of agreement reaching 79.4% to statement 2.14 of the questionnaire as level of education increases (refer to Appendix 4.9). This might be emanating from the probability that higher educational qualifications are often associated with shorter and fixed working hours leaving holders of such qualifications with ample time to shop during the day. The opposite is often associated with lower

educational qualifications. Shopping frequency and convenience of trading hours indicate a significant relationship at 0.013. A cross-tabulation between these variables shows that level of agreement to statement 2.14 increases with shopping frequency (refer to Appendix 4.10). It implies that regular shoppers are consumers satisfied with trading hours offered by a particular store.

A significant association is implied by a p-value of 0.000 between statement 'The store has a fair return policy' (statement 2.15) and level of education. Cross-tabulation results on these variables report an increasing level of agreement to statement 2.15 as level of education increases (refer to Appendix 4.11). This might be emanating from the probability that higher levels of education are associated with better levels of awareness and scrutiny of what a store provides in its policy. Better awareness of store policy leads to informed decision making hence satisfaction as an end result of service delivered. Similarly, a p-value of 0.019 is recorded between statement 2.15 and shopping frequency. This indicates a significant association. Furthermore, a cross-tabulation between these two variables indicates a decreasing level of disagreement to statement 2.15 as shopping frequency increases (refer to Appendix 4.12). It implies that a positive perception towards a store's return policy induces improved shopping frequency of consumers.

Consumers' level of education indicates an association to the belief that 'store personnel's attitude is always friendly. In addition, cross-tabulation results reflect an increasing level of agreement to statement 2.17 of the questionnaire as level of education increases (refer to Appendix 4.13). This is derived from the belief that better education facilitates understanding and compromise such that highly educated individuals are expected to be lenient to store personnel by considering the working pressure they endure.

A significant association ( $p=0.001$ ) is recorded between statement 2.26 'The store ensures good security for my well-being' and shopping frequency. It implies that good security measures in a supermarket influence how many times a consumer shops from a particular outlet. Cross-tabulation results of the two variables indicate an increasing level of agreement to statement 2.26 up to 76.9% as shopping frequency increases for consumers shopping more than four times a month (refer to Appendix 4.14). It implies that good store security measures promote increased shopping frequency.

Question 2.30 on whether or not consumers will continue patronising a specific store indicated a significant relationship ( $p=0.013$ ) with distance to that store. It points out that distance to a store influences whether or not a consumer continues visiting that store. Cross-tabulation (Appendix 4.15) between question 2.30 and distance to store indicates a decreasing level of agreement as distance increases. It suggests that consumers would most likely not consider re-visiting a store that is quite a distant away from them.

In terms of ranking elements crucial in determining service quality, 'quality of (products, store layout) recorded a significant association ( $p=0.034$ ) with level of education. It implies that the level of learning amongst respondents has an influence in their definition of service quality. Cross-tabulation results from appendix 4.16 illustrate that the higher the level of education, the greater the importance placed on quality (of products or store layout) as an attribute of service quality. An average of 99.75% of consumers who are matriculated and above emphasised the necessity of quality products and store layout as a determinant of service quality.

As part of service quality, 'proper signage' (question 3.5) indicates an association with level of education ( $p=0.006$ ) and shopping frequency ( $p=0.013$ ). Further analysis based on appendix 4.17 indicates a higher level of importance placed on proper signage as an attribute of quality service as the level of education among consumers increases.

Similarly, cross-tabulation results indicate a higher level of importance placed on proper signage amongst regular shoppers visiting the store at least three times a month (refer to Appendix 4.18). It implies that store signage influences shopping frequency of customers at a supermarket with regular customers most likely to be attained through offering proper signage than not.

#### **4.7 CORRELATIONS**

Bivariate correlation was also performed on the (ordinal) data. The results are found in appendix 5. The results indicate the following patterns:

- Positive values indicate a directly proportional relationship between the variables and a negative value indicates an inverse relationship.
- All significant relationships are indicated by a \* or \*\*.

The correlation value between “The store layout makes it easy to locate items for groceries” and “The store was well lit” is 0.413. This is a directly related proportionality. Respondents indicate that the better lit the store is, the easier it was to locate items, and vice versa.

A correlation value of 0.467 between statements ‘The grocery items are easily classified in each aisle’ and ‘The store was well lit’ is shown in appendix 5. It implies a direct proportion between the statements meaning that proper store lighting promotes easier identification of groceries in each aisle. Likewise, a positive correlation is noted between store lighting and statement ‘The signage was clearly visible’. Respondents found it easier to identify store signage in a properly lit store.

A correlation of 0.379 between statements ‘The aisles are always free of clutter’ and ‘The store is always visually appealing’. This is a direct relationship indicating that a clean store environment visually appeals to consumers. Similarly, a positive correlation of 0.382 is recorded between statements ‘There is sufficient space to wheel a trolley in the aisle’ and ‘The store layout makes it easy to locate items for groceries’. It suggests that ample aisle space necessitates easier identification of groceries in the store.

Another trend indicates a directly proportional relationship between ‘There is adequate signage to locate products’ and statements ‘The store makes it easy to locate items for groceries’, ‘The store is visually appealing’. Respondents indicate that adequate signage, makes it easy to locate items at the same time making the store environment visually appealing. In essence, all the above mentioned relationships relate to aisle management (in terms of hygiene, ample space, lighting and adequate signage) that directly influence consumers’ ease of locating items in the store and how visually appealing a store is.

There is a directly proportional relationship between statement ‘The store has a delivery system which caters to my needs’ (Question 2.20) and six statements that follow. For instance, a direct relationship exists ( $p=0.267$ ) between statement 2.20 and ‘This store has convenient shopping hours’. Consumers identify flexible trading hours as part of satisfying their needs therefore, the more convenient the shopping hours are, the better their satisfaction. Equally, a direct relationship ( $p=0.387$ ) is indicated between question 2.20 and statement ‘This store has a fair return policy’. Consumers



identify an impartial return policy as part of their satisfaction. All four questions that follow up to 'The packers are always friendly' indicate a directly proportional relationship with question 2.20. In effect, for a store to establish satisfactory delivery system it has to identify convenient trading hours, deliver a reasonable return policy, ensure sale items are accessible to consumers and instil a positive attitude in its personnel.

Negative values imply an inverse relationship that is, the variables have an opposite effect on each other (as one increases, the other decreases). For example, the correlation value between "Proper signage" and "The store layout makes it easy to locate items for hardware" is -0.132. It implies, the better the signage, the less difficult it is to find items.

An inverse relationship ( $p = -0.049$ ) is noted for the statement 'There is sufficient space to wheel a trolley in the aisle' and importance placed on 'proper signage' (question 3.5). The more aisle space is available for consumers, the less emphasis placed on the need for proper signage in the store.

A p value of  $-0.081$  for statement 'The signage is clearly visible' and importance placed on 'availability of store personnel' (question 3.3) identifies an inverse relationship. If consumers find store signage clearly visible, they place less emphasis on the need for readily available store personnel. Similarly, an inverse relationship exists ( $p = -0.011$ ) for statement 'The store layout makes it easy to locate items for hardware and the importance of available store personnel (question 3.3). It implies that the easier it is to identify items in a particular store layout, the less the need for store personnel.

Another pattern indicates an indirect relationship for statement 'The store has convenient shopping hours' and importance placed on pricing and its visibility (question 3.4). It implies that the more convenient consumers find it to visit a store, the less concerned they are about the pricing of that particular store.

Emphasis placed on availability of store personnel has an inverse relationship with personnel attitude, fair pricing and store visual appeal. For example, a p value of  $-0.025$  between statement 'The store personnel's attitude is always friendly' and importance placed on personnel's availability by consumers (question 3.3) indicate an

opposite relationship. A negative store employee attitude results in consumers placing less emphasis on the availability of such employees.

Statement 'The store is always visually appealing' reveals an inverse relationship ( $p = -0.021$ ) with how important store personnel availability is to consumers. The more visually appealing a store is, the less the need for store employee availability. Moreover, question 2.27 'The products are always fairly priced' signifies an inverse relationship ( $p = -0.062$ ) with importance placed on store employee availability to consumers. It implies that as consumers perceive fair pricing within a particular store, the less they will require store personnel.

Four statements in this study indicate an inverse relationship with importance placed on pricing and its visibility by consumers (question 3.4). Firstly, statement 2.22 'The store is always visually appealing' indicate an indirect relationship ( $p = -0.042$ ) with the level of importance placed on pricing and its visibility by consumers. It implies that the more consumers perceive a visually appealing store environment, the less concerned they are about the pricing of products. Secondly, statement 2.23 'Store personnel are always willing to assist' shows an inverse relationship ( $p = -0.022$ ) with emphasis placed on pricing of products by consumers (question 3.4). It infers that the more willing store employees are to assist customers, the less concerned consumers are about product pricing. Thirdly, statement 2.24 'The fresh produce is always of a high standard' suggest an opposite relationship ( $p = -0.015$ ) with emphasis consumers place on product pricing. It suggests that the higher the standard of fresh produce offered by a store, the lesser the level of importance placed on product pricing by consumers. Lastly, statement 2.29 'I am able to get sound advice from store personnel if ever I am in doubt' reveals an inverse relationship ( $p = -0.082$ ) with emphasis placed on product pricing by consumers. It implies that the more the perception in consumers that they consistently receive sound advice from store employees, the less concerned they are about product pricing.

#### **4.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter presented an analysis of data collected in this study. Various applicable quantitative analysis measures were also presented to ascertain descriptive and inferential statistics that satisfy objectives of this study. Charts and tables were utilised

to provide a better analysis of data. Furthermore, results indicated important relationships and disparities between variables of this study.

In brief, findings of this chapter can be abridged as follows:

- Consumer perception in this study's target population was favourable towards service quality currently rendered at Durban supermarkets. The majority indicated to continue visiting particular stores and recommend them to others as a result.
- Customer experiences were analysed in this chapter and various associations (direct and indirect) to their behaviour were emphasised based on results.
- An analysis of various elements that constitute service quality indicated that there is a relationship or various associations between customer service and buying behaviour.

In the subsequent chapter (chapter five), research findings will be discussed based on current literature. This discussion facilitates a better comprehension of findings in chapter four.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The preceding chapter (Chapter 4) solely focused on analysing data of this survey however, it is deemed necessary to present a comprehensive analysis of results. This chapter aims at providing a thorough discussion of findings in chapter 4 based on recent literature to facilitate better understanding of these findings. Discussion of findings is aligned to objectives set in chapter 1 of this study. As part of satisfying objective four of this study, recommendations are stated to enhance customer service in a supermarket context.

#### **5.2 SYNOPSIS OF STUDY**

The main aim of this study was to determine the influence of customer service on consumer buying behaviour at selected supermarkets in the greater Durban area. The significance of service quality has been appropriately emphasised in previous chapters in retail context. Customer based data (first-hand information) was utilised in this survey to ascertain consumer perception and experience in a supermarket. These two assisted in modelling the resultant buying behaviour of consumers in a store environment.

Chapter 2 reviewed literature related to service quality and consumer behaviour. The chapter presented proper channels of rendering consistent quality service to customers by determining crucial facets of customer service and evaluating how consumers behave in buying situations as a number of theoretical propositions towards consumer behaviour were presented. Consequently, chapter 2 facilitated partial achievement of objectives 1 and 4 of this study.

In chapter 4, results of this study were analysed, interpreted and presented. This study was quantitative in nature such that 450 questionnaires were dispatched with 399 completed and captured for analysis.

Major conclusions of this study reflect that the majority of consumers are content with the level of service they receive at particular supermarkets therefore, they will continue visiting these outlets and recommend them. This confirms studies by Gounaris, Dimitriadis and Strathakopoulos (2010:150) suggesting that consumer contentment with service generally results in repeated purchases. Furthermore, literature in chapter 2 indicated that each customer has an ability of spreading word of mouth to an average of four individuals (Levy and Weitz 2012:510).

Secondly, analysis of various aspects that constitute service quality in relation to consumer perception and experience indicate an association between service and consumer buying behaviour. Results from chi-square tests in chapter 4 indicate various significant relationships between consumer biographical data and questionnaire statements (i.e. consumer behaviour in terms of spending, shopping frequency and constituents of customer service). In addition, bivariate correlation performed on ordinal data in chapter 4 indicates existence of direct and inverse relationships between the variables. This confirms studies by Blodgett, Wakefield and Barnes (1995:31) which posit that the major influence of consumer choice of retail outlets or service providers is customer service. In addition, Bojei et al., (2013:176) in their effort to illustrate the link between service and consumer behaviour, found that customer service as a proactive or reactive activity, it has a significant impact on customer retention.

The objectives of this study were stated as follows in Chapter 1:

### **5.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

- To determine the relationship between customer service and consumer buying behaviour;
- To ascertain customer perception on service quality that would influence consumer buying behaviour;
- To understand customer experiences and how they influence the consumer buying behaviour;
- To determine ways of enhancing customer service that will positively impact on the consumer buying behaviour.

The aforementioned objectives were addressed by exploring and answering research questions which follow:

- What is the relationship between customer service and consumer buying behaviour?
- What are consumer perceptions towards service quality?
- What are the consumer experiences in service delivery?
- Which ways can enhance customer service and positively impact consumer buying behaviour?

Objectives 1 and question 1 were addressed in chapter 2 and 4. Chapter 2 indicates an association between service and consumer buying behaviour. Customer service is viewed as a retailer's effort of effectively meeting consumer need through various offerings. Similarly, consumer behaviour is centralised on actively evaluating available options to find one that adequately satisfies a need (Ward 2014:3; Schiffman and Wisenblit 2015:30). It can be deduced that both aspects (i.e. customer service and consumer behaviour) seek to satisfy a specific need. Furthermore, chapter 2 reviewed that after service has been delivered, consumers utilise perceptions developed towards service against expectations to evaluate service quality (Levy and Weitz 2012:504).

Chapter 4 of the study advocates a relationship between customer service and consumer behaviour. A chi-square test was performed and the alternate hypothesis indicates an association between these variables. A number of aspects that make up customer service recorded p values less than 0.05 (i.e. significant relationship) when compared to elements forming part of consumer behaviour (refer to Table 4.22). Moreover, bivariate correlations performed in chapter 4 indicate direct and inverse relationship between variables.

Objective 2 and question 2 of this study were covered in chapters 2 and 4. Chapter 2 emphasised that consumers develop perceptions soon after service has been rendered and they use such perceptions to assess quality of service. Chapter 4 provides first-hand information on consumers' current perception of service delivered in Durban supermarkets. It is noted that the majority of consumers are content with the level of service they receive and are prepared to recommend particular outlets to their society.

Both objective 3 and question 3 were addressed in chapters 2 and 4. Chapter 2 reviewed current literature focused on consumer experience during service delivery.

As depicted by Dhurup (2005:167) 'moments of truth' (i.e. service encounters) indicated the significance of a conducive customer experience. Chapter 2 highlighted the importance of a positive customer experience in ensuring satisfaction realising that 'first impressions make lasting impressions' (Human et al 2013:395). In addition, chapter 4 through analysis of data indicated current customer experience in Durban supermarkets. Different aspects of service recorded either positive or negative customer experiences based on data. However, the majority of respondents indicated an overall positive experience in Durban supermarkets.

The last objective and research question 4 of this study will be addressed in this current chapter (chapter 5). The latter sections of this chapter present recommendations in improving service quality based on findings of this survey.

#### **5.4 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS STUDY**

As mentioned in chapter 1, various sources of literature covering customer service and consumer behaviour have overlooked how service quality influences behaviour of consumers (Steinhoff and Palmatier 2014:1). This study bridges this gap in literature as current consumer perception and experience during service encounters are evaluated to determine their behaviour. Based on findings of this study, the majority of consumers are content with the level of service they receive at certain supermarkets; as a result they are willing to continue visiting such stores and recommend them to others. This confirms what literature advocates that rendering high quality service results in consumer loyalty and positive word of mouth (Terblanche et al 2013:265).

Secondly, this study assists supermarkets especially in Durban to determine the current perception and experience of consumers regarding the level of service they receive. This knowledge equips supermarket management to make relevant alterations to various aspects of service that require attention and ensure customer satisfaction. Moreover, recommendations made in this study facilitate pertinent and effective restructuring of current service strategies in Durban supermarkets.

## 5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on reviewed literature of this study, results of the survey and analysis thereof, the following recommendations will prove useful in management of supermarkets in the greater Durban region.

- Results indicate that customers attach importance on all aspects of service quality (i.e. atmospherics, reliability and policy). However, the greatest level of importance is placed on atmospherics and reliability as part of service quality. It can be summed up that atmospherics and reliability are stronger predictors of high quality service. Management of supermarkets should immensely focus on atmospherics and reliability aspects of service. Efforts to foster a pleasant and modern store layout/environment should be implemented and maintained. A continuous process of ensuring quality and fresh grocery items are available to consumers should be emphasised. Fair pricing that matches quality of products offered by a supermarket should be a norm. Based on results, despite policy not being the strongest indicator of service quality among the aforementioned predictors; its importance should not be disregarded.

A chi-square test performed between elements of service quality and how consumers behave in terms of shopping frequency and magnitude of spending indicates various strong associations.

- Store lighting has been shown to have an influence on shopping frequency of customers. Store management should ensure attractive and adequate in-store lighting is made available to consumers. Lighting can also be manipulated to influence mood of consumers when shopping. Apart from guiding customers throughout the store, lighting has been identified to affect sales (both impulse and planned purchases), increase shopper traffic and develop visual interest (Deepika and Neeraja 2012:933).
- Aisle hygiene should be upheld to establish positive consumer perception. Results indicate a significant influence of aisle hygiene on shopping frequency of consumers. Items should be neatly packed on shelves for easier identification of products and general visual appeal. There is need to ensure adequate space is provided near checkout counters as customers queue up. This area should not be cramped with products or simply due to poor



arrangement, this will help in reducing congestion in-store (Aghazadeh 2005:42).

- Proper signage has been identified to be of relevance in altering shopping frequency and magnitude of spending amongst consumers. Adequate in-store signage should be available to consumers at all times that are visually clear and easy to understand. This helps in saving time as consumers seek assistance from store employees and reduces consumer frustration when shopping. Proper signage ensures a smooth flow of shopper traffic inside the store. Shopping experience can be complex for consumers and a poorly arranged environment dissuades consumers (Jones and Park 2012:1).
- Management need to ensure effective measures that guarantee consumer security and wellness. Results indicate an influence of security on shopping frequency. It starts from parking lots in the supermarket, consumers need to feel secure. Security personnel need to be adequate and always alert to ensure consumer security. Basic security measures like cameras, monitoring systems and personnel need to be consistently available and working. However, security covers a broad spectrum. Products offered and operations of a supermarket should enhance consumer security and wellness beyond the shopping environment. Consumers of today realise that their buying habits impact ecological issues such that they are concerned whether or not their buying and who they buy from promote a green environment. Management should practice and advice consumers that they offer ecologically friendly products for example through recycling or offering products that are ecologically compatible (e.g. biodegradable packaging) (Gupta 2013:11).
- Management is advised to adhere to convenient trading hours for consumers. Results of this study indicate a significant influence of trading hours on shopping frequency. Generally, South African retailers have resorted to longer trading hours to ensure convenience of consumers (Prinsloo 2014:12). However, consumer convenience is largely dependent on store location than its trading hours. Levy and Weitz (2012:223) emphasise how crucial store location is to ensure a successful retail strategy. Likewise, a study by Jaravaza and Chitando (2013:302) indicates that consumers place much emphasis on store location in choosing outlets that are convenient to them.

- Supermarkets should uphold consistent fair return policies as analysis indicate an influence of such policies on shopping frequency of consumers. Fair return policies are a requirement of the Consumer Protection Act 68 of 2008 and need to be observed to avoid lawsuits. However, observing this law is not entirely detrimental to supermarkets. It can be an opportunity for management to ensure customer satisfaction and a cost effective way of differentiating. Consumers might not be willing to endure the entire process of returning products and keep the unsatisfactory products. Management should ensure convenient and fair return policies are practised and communicated to consumers as they offer an opportunity to redress, retain loyalty and differentiate from competitors (Colburn 2013:1).
- It is also imperative that management of supermarkets encourages store employees to instigate communication with customers, rather than wait for them to ask for assistance. Apart from instilling the feel good factor within customers, this also saves their time. Initiating conversations with consumers requires staff to be trained in non-verbal cues, self-confidence and thorough product knowledge and retailer's philosophy. Traditionally, there is low level of engagement between staff and consumers in supermarkets. This nature of involvement has a massive effect on consumer perception (Terblance et al 2013:258).
- As mentioned in chapter 1, retailers should not view consumer complaints as negative responses but opportunities to improve service (Arshraf, Sajjad and Rizwan 2013:122). Supermarket should ensure they have decisive complaints management arm in their operations. This assists them in identifying consumer dissatisfaction, learn how to deal with it, reimburse for service failure and provide an explanation why it has happened. Prompt service recovery though it does not compensate for service failure, it reduces the potential damage thereof (Dhurup 2005:318).
- Given a greater likelihood of front line employees engaging with customers, management should empower such staff to offer service redress to consumers. Front line personnel are much better acquainted with consumer needs and their engagement relieves management to concentrate more strategic concerns of the business (Dhurup 2005:319).

## **5.6 IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This study has investigated aspects pertinent to ensuring service quality based on consumer perception and experience in supermarkets. However, some issues noted below have been raised that can assist in future research efforts within this area of study.

It is recommended that a qualitative survey is performed for future purposes to uncover some underlying issues that might have been overlooked by the nature of this study. During collection of data it has been noted that some participants were willing to further reveal their experiences and perceptions beyond what was prescribed by the questionnaire.

This study has restricted service quality elements to atmospherics, reliability and policy. Focus group interviews are recommended for future research to uncover some of the underlying aspects of service quality beyond the ones mentioned.

Despite this study observing various consumer races its main focus was on evaluating consumers' overall perception and experience not at group or individual level. For future research it is recommended that a comparative analysis is performed across cultures in South Africa. This will facilitate in-depth knowledge of how cultural inclinations impact perceptions and ultimately behaviour.

This study indicated that consumers in Durban place high emphasis on quality among aspects of service. However, further exploration is recommended in determining if consumers are prepared to pay a premium to gain quality products or outlets should continue emphasising everyday low pricing strategies.

## **5.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This study has shown how customer service influences buying behaviour of consumers at supermarkets in Durban. Aspects of service quality and buying behaviour were reviewed. Findings and literature indicate the significance of service quality in supermarkets in moulding consumer behaviour. The ever-changing nature of the retail environment and behaviour of consumers necessitates an on-going process of evaluating consumer behaviour and restructuring of service strategies.

Recommendations and conclusions provided in this chapter only represent a portion of possible alternatives that can be followed by supermarkets in enhancing service quality. Other suggestions can be effectively utilised to improve service for customers.

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## APPENDIX 1



Cell: 078 876 8922

17 Beech Road

Glen Anil, Umhlanga

Durban 4051

Dear Respondent

I am a registered student at the Durban University of Technology in the Department of Marketing and Retail Business Management. I humbly request your assistance in completing the attached questionnaire for the M. Tech: Degree in Marketing. My topic is entitled: **The influence of customer service on consumer buying behaviour at selected supermarkets in the greater Durban area.**

I have been granted permission by my institution to conduct an in-house investigation and administration of questionnaires relating to the research topic. To successfully complete my Master's degree, the latter part of the empirical framework involves the administration of a structured closed ended questionnaire. You have been randomly selected as one of the respondents comprising the sampling frame of this organisation.

I will be grateful if you kindly complete the attached questionnaire. The questionnaire should take 10 minutes at most to complete and only requires you to mark with an **X** next to the relevant pre-coded response. Please kindly complete all questions. You are assured that your responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will not be divulged to any other party. Your name should not be mentioned on the questionnaire and will remain anonymous. Your participation is merely voluntary and there is no coercion or undue influence in completing this questionnaire. In addition, the responses to the questionnaire, once collated, will be used for statistical purposes only. I will make the research report available at the DUT library.

Your co-operation in assisting me with this important component of my study is highly appreciated. If there are any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me at the above cell number. Once again I thank you in advance for enabling me to complete this research project.

Thanking you

Tinashe Musasa

**APPENDIX 2**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE**

Please show your responses in the following statements by means of an (X).

**QUESTION 1**

**1.1 Gender**

Male	1
Female	2

**1.2 Age (in years)**

18-29	1
30-40	2
41-55	3
56 and above	4

**1.3 Marital Status**

Single	1
Married	2

**1.4 Education**

Lower than matric	1
Matriculated	2
Post matriculated	3

### 1.5 Monthly Grocery Spending

R1000 and less	1
R1001-R2500	2
R2501-R5000	3
More than R5000	4

### 1.6 Family Size

0-2 members	1
3-6 members	2
More than 6 members	3

### 1.7 Distance to closest store

1 km and less	1
1.01 km-5 km	2
5.01 km-10km	3
More than 10km	4

### 1.8 How many times in a month do you go shopping?

<b>Once a month</b>	<b>Twice a month</b>	<b>a 3 times a month</b>	<b>a 4 times a month</b>	<b>a More than 4 times a month</b>
1	2	3	4	5

## QUESTION 2

### SERVICE QUALITY INDICATORS:

I have based my research on three service quality indicators (Atmospherics, Policy and Reliability) which may/may not impact on the quality of service at the supermarkets. Please respond according to your most recent EXPERIENCE.

ATMOSPHERICS	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
2.1 The store was well lit	1	2	3	4	5
2.2 The aisles are always free of clutter	1	2	3	4	5
2.3 There is sufficient space to wheel a trolley in the aisle.	1	2	3	4	5
2.4 The grocery items are easily classified in each aisle.	1	2	3	4	5
2.5 There is adequate signage to locate products.	1	2	3	4	5
2.6 The signage is clearly visible.	1	2	3	4	5
2.7 The store layout makes it easy to locate items for groceries.	1	2	3	4	5

2.8 The store layout 1 2 3 4 5  
 makes it easy to locate  
 items for hardware.

2.9 The store layout 1 2 3 4 5  
 makes it easy to locate  
 items for the Outdoors.

2.10 The store layout 1 2 3 4 5  
 makes it easy to locate  
 clothing items on sale.

2.11 The store layout 1 2 3 4 5  
 makes it easy to locate  
 toys and games on sale.

2.12 The in store 1 2 3 4 5  
 announcements are  
 pleasantly delivered.

2.13 I am able to shop 1 2 3 4 5  
 without unnecessary  
 noise in the store.

**POLICY** **STRONGLY DISAGREE** **DISAGREE** **NEUTRAL** **AGREE** **STRONGLY AGREE**

2.14 This store has 1 2 3 4 5  
 convenient shopping  
 hours

2.15 This store has a fair return policy.	1	2	3	4	5
2.16 I am able to source out of stock items at sale prices.	1	2	3	4	5
2.17 The store personnel's attitude is always friendly.	1	2	3	4	5
2.18 The cashiers always greet me before proceeding with the transaction.	1	2	3	4	5
2.19 The packers are always friendly.	1	2	3	4	5
2.20 The store has a delivery system which caters to my needs.	1	2	3	4	5
2.21 The store personnel are always neatly dressed in uniform.	1	2	3	4	5
2.22 The store is always visually appealing.	1	2	3	4	5
2.23 Store personnel are always willing to assist.	1	2	3	4	5

<b>RELIABILITY</b>	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE</b>	<b>DISAGREE</b>	<b>NEUTRAL</b>	<b>AGREE</b>	<b>STRONGLY AGREE</b>
2.24 The fresh produce is always of a high standard.	1	2	3	4	5
2.25 I am able to locate products that are culturally specific to me.	1	2	3	4	5
2.26 The store ensures good security for my well-being.	1	2	3	4	5
2.27 The products are always fairly priced.	1	2	3	4	5
2.28 Store personnel are knowledgeable about the products in the store.	1	2	3	4	5
2.29 I am able to get sound advice from store	1	2	3	4	5



personnel if ever I am in doubt.

**Based on your responses to questions above, would you:**

	Yes	No
2.30 Continue shopping at the same supermarket?	1	2
2.31 Recommend this supermarket to family or friends?	1	2

### QUESTION 3

**Please respond to the following based on what you think is most important to service quality.**

	Most Important	Important	Not very important	Least important
3.1 Quality (of products, store layout).	1	2	3	5
3.2 Accessibility (of store, trolley bays, checkout counters and parking space).	1	2	3	5
3.3 Availability (of store personnel, operational pay points).	1	2	3	5
3.4 Pricing of products and its visibility.	1	2	3	5
3.5 Proper signage	1	2	3	5

**APPENDIX 3**  
**Pearson Chi-Square Tests**

		Gender	Age (in years)	Marital Status	Education	Monthly Grocery Spending	Family Size	Distance to closest store	How many times in a month do you go shopping?
The store was well lit	Chi-square	,758	6,545	1,645	2,997	4,878	3,180	5,317	28,196
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	,684	,365	,439	,558	,560	,528	,504	.000*
The aisles are always free of clutter	Chi-square	2,931	3,638	,091	6,550	11,854	3,841	4,430	25,539
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	,231	,726	,955	,162	,065	,428	,619	.001*
There is sufficient space to wheel a trolley in the aisle	Chi-square	1,926	2,548	1,294	4,595	3,217	2,548	9,855	28,473
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	,382	,863	,524	,331	,781	,636	,131	.000*
The grocery items are easily classified in each aisle	Chi-square	,684	8,966	5,187	10,042	7,707	3,148	17,195	16,243
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	,710	,175	,075	.040*	,260	,533	.009*	.039*
There is adequate signage to locate products	Chi-square	,437	5,727	2,622	6,633	17,490	5,335	4,782	9,059
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	,804	,454	,270	,157	.008*	,255	,572	,337
The signage is clearly visible	Chi-square	4,602	8,345	3,593	2,450	5,992	2,314	6,715	6,118
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	,100	,214	,166	,654	,424	,678	0,348	,634
The store layout makes it easy to locate items for groceries	Chi-square	1,387	6,246	,820	8,715	8,985	8,109	7,562	14,356
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8

	Sig.	,500	,396	,664	,069	,174	,088	0,272	,073
The store layout makes it easy to locate items for hardware	Chi-square	,519	8,863	3,258	5,249	4,859	2,212	4,993	7,668
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	,772	,181	,196	,263	,562	,697	,545	,467
The store layout makes it easy to locate items for the Outdoors	Chi-square	,252	5,824	2,483	5,975	3,655	7,693	6,511	13,676
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	,882	,443	,289	,201	,723	,103	,368	,091
The store layout makes it easy to locate clothing items on sale	Chi-square	,358	13,557	3,619	4,718	1,894	4,975	6,889	22,124
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	,836	.035*	,164	,317	,929	,290	,331	.005*
The store layout makes it easy to locate toys and games on sale	Chi-square	2,756	10,816	1,166	3,948	2,849	6,295	6,911	12,299
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	,252	,094	,558	,413	,828	,178	,329	,138
The in store announcements are pleasantly delivered	Chi-square	,025	5,879	2,123	1,758	5,308	2,545	5,975	10,692
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	,988	,437	,346	,780	,505	,637	,426	,220
I am able to shop without unnecessary noise in the store	Chi-square	,306	9,299	3,889	5,545	15,312	14,276	5,555	8,284
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	,858	,157	,143	,236	.018*	.006*	,475	,406
This store has convenient shopping hours	Chi-square	,736	10,331	5,527	11,160	5,968	3,853	13,559	19,470
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	,692	0,111	,063	.025*	,427	,426	.035*	.013*
This store has a fair return policy	Chi-square	,969	4,210	,108	21,132	5,301	3,525	8,114	18,282
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	,616	,648	,947	.000*	,506	,474	,230	.019*
I am able to source out of stock items at sale prices	Chi-square	,863	14,346	1,870	7,658	4,197	,556	2,073	13,273

	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	,650	.026*	,393	,105	,650	,968	,913	,103
The store personnel's attitude is always friendly	Chi-square	1,167	11,194	1,874	12,015	6,620	6,564	10,447	10,643
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	,558	,083	,392	.017*	,357	,161	,107	,223
The cashiers always greet me before proceeding with the transaction	Chi-square	2,646	4,625	1,231	7,754	9,372	5,644	4,330	9,736
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	,266	,593	,540	,101	,154	,227	,632	,284
The packers are always friendly	Chi-square	2,164	9,132	4,934	6,309	15,112	7,853	8,780	9,850
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	,339	,166	,085	,177	.019*	,097	,186	,276
The store has a delivery system which caters to my needs	Chi-square	,277	7,215	1,401	2,218	8,785	9,554	9,036	4,559
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	,871	,301	,496	,696	,186	.049*	,172	,803
The store personnel are always neatly dressed in uniform	Chi-square	3,195	6,876	,234	10,567	6,784	3,368	10,297	12,537
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	,202	0,332	,890	.032*	,341	,498	0,113	,129
The store is always visually appealing	Chi-square	,441	4,735	2,621	8,561	6,140	2,775	3,725	12,945
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	,802	,578	,270	,073	,408	,596	0,714	0,114
Store personnel are always willing to assist	Chi-square	,262	11,221	1,637	7,759	9,890	4,343	10,746	7,016
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	,877	,082	,441	,101	,129	,362	,097	,535
The fresh produce is always of a high standard	Chi-square	,568	4,184	,314	7,893	3,465	8,748	3,346	8,547
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	,753	,652	,855	,096	,749	,068	0,764	,382

I am able to locate products that are culturally specific to me	Chi-square	7,945	6,688	3,140	4,818	4,322	4,127	10,612	11,233
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	.019*	,351	,208	,306	,633	,389	,101	,189
The store ensures good security for my well-being	Chi-square	4,624	8,792	,208	4,634	6,152	8,782	4,123	27,066
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	,099	,186	,901	,327	,406	,067	,660	.001*
The products are always fairly priced	Chi-square	3,241	1,943	,034	2,535	4,387	5,919	6,988	11,471
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	,198	,925	,983	,638	,624	,205	,322	,176
Store personnel are knowledgeable about the products in the store	Chi-square	1,314	8,458	1,129	4,670	5,404	3,395	4,186	5,061
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	,518	,206	,569	,323	,493	,494	0,652	,751
I am able to get sound advice from store personnel if ever I am in doubt	Chi-square	,403	4,383	4,957	1,679	6,571	2,576	2,154	4,707
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	,817	,625	,084	,794	,362	,631	,905	,788
Continue shopping at the same supermarket?	Chi-square	,799	4,274	,965	1,639	3,992	12,901	10,695	,684
	df	1	3	1	2	3	2	3	4
	Sig.	,371	0,233	,326	,441	,262	.002*	.013*	,953
Recommend this supermarket to family or friends?	Chi-square	,692	2,813	,622	1,923	1,689	6,025	2,584	2,809
	df	1	3	1	2	3	2	3	4
	Sig.	,406	,421	,430	,382	,639	.049*	,460	,590
Quality (of products, store layout)	Chi-square	2,000	10,017	,482	10,396	7,134	5,977	6,938	7,880
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	0,368	0,124	0,786	.034*	0,309	0,201	0,327	0,445
Accessibility (of store, trolley bays, checkout counters and parking space)	Chi-square	4,242	4,630	2,291	9,040	6,759	9,667	2,735	11,029
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8

Availability (of store personnel, operational pay points)	Sig.	,120	0,592	,318	0,06	0,344	.046*	0,841	0,2
	Chi-square	8,307	3,127	3,306	7,454	7,190	8,607	3,312	5,581
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
Pricing of products and its visibility	Sig.	.016*	0,793	,191	0,114	0,304	0,072	0,769	0,694
	Chi-square	2,190	2,652	,169	1,192	2,808	2,085	1,817	5,595
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
Proper signage	Sig.	0,334	0,851	0,919	0,879	0,833	0,72	0,936	0,692
	Chi-square	1,050	8,204	1,880	14,556	8,925	3,587	11,199	19,442
	df	2	6	2	4	6	4	6	8
	Sig.	,592	0,224	,391	.006*	,178	,465	0,082	.013*

## APPENDIX 4.1

**The store was well lit \* How many times in a month do you go shopping? Crosstabulation**

			How many times in a month do you go shopping?					Total
			Once a month	Twice a month	3 times a month	4 times a month	More than 4 times a month	
The store was well lit	Disagree	Count	14	10	8	10	3	45
		% within How many times in a month do you go shopping?	15,1%	8,7%	11,6%	22,7%	3,8%	11,3%
	Neutral	Count	26	28	13	4	7	78
		% within How many times in a month do you go shopping?	28,0%	24,3%	18,8%	9,1%	9,0%	19,5%
	Agree	Count	53	77	48	30	68	276
		% within How many times in a month do you go shopping?	57,0%	67,0%	69,6%	68,2%	87,2%	69,2%
Total		Count	93	115	69	44	78	399
		% within How many times in a month do you go shopping?	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

## APPENDIX 4.2

**The aisles are always free of clutter \* How many times in a month do you go shopping? Crosstabulation**

			How many times in a month do you go shopping?					Total
			Once a month	Twice a month	3 times a month	4 times a month	More than 4 times a month	
The aisles are always free of clutter	Disagree	Count	18	17	7	7	8	57
		% within How many times in a month do you go shopping?	19,4%	14,8%	10,1%	15,9%	10,3%	14,3%
	Neutral	Count	42	40	19	9	16	126
		% within How many times in a month do you go shopping?	45,2%	34,8%	27,5%	20,5%	20,5%	31,6%
	Agree	Count	33	58	43	28	54	216
		% within How many times in a month do you go shopping?	35,5%	50,4%	62,3%	63,6%	69,2%	54,1%
Total		Count	93	115	69	44	78	399
		% within How many times in a month do you go shopping?	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

### APPENDIX 4.3

The grocery items are easily classified in each aisle \* Education Crosstabulation

			Education			Total
			Lower than matric	Matriculated	Post matriculated	
The grocery items are easily classified in each aisle	Disagree	Count	2	22	20	44
		% within Education	7,4%	15,8%	8,6%	11,0%
	Neutral	Count	10	23	48	81
		% within Education	37,0%	16,5%	20,6%	20,3%
	Agree	Count	15	94	165	274
		% within Education	55,6%	67,6%	70,8%	68,7%
Total	Count	27	139	233	399	
	% within Education	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	

### APPENDIX 4.4

The grocery items are easily classified in each aisle \* How many times in a month do you go shopping? Crosstabulation

			How many times in a month do you go shopping?					Total
			Once a month	Twice a month	3 times a month	4 times a month	More than 4 times a month	
The grocery items are easily classified in each aisle	Disagree	Count	12	13	10	3	6	44
		% within How many times in a month do you go shopping?	12,9%	11,3%	14,5%	6,8%	7,7%	11,0%
	Neutral	Count	28	23	8	12	10	81
		% within How many times in a month do you go shopping?	30,1%	20,0%	11,6%	27,3%	12,8%	20,3%
	Agree	Count	53	79	51	29	62	274
		% within How many times in a month do you go shopping?	57,0%	68,7%	73,9%	65,9%	79,5%	68,7%
Total	Count	93	115	69	44	78	399	
	% within How many	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	



times in a month do you go shopping?						
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### APPENDIX 4.5

**There is adequate signage to locate products \* Monthly Grocery Spending Crosstabulation**

			Monthly Grocery Spending				Total
			Less than R1000	R1001 - R2500	R2501 - R5000	More than R5000	
There is adequate signage to locate products	Disagree	Count	7	18	15	3	43
		% within Monthly Grocery Spending	5,8%	12,2%	20,0%	5,5%	10,8%
	Neutral	Count	30	35	25	12	102
		% within Monthly Grocery Spending	24,8%	23,6%	33,3%	21,8%	25,6%
	Agree	Count	84	95	35	40	254
		% within Monthly Grocery Spending	69,4%	64,2%	46,7%	72,7%	63,7%
Total		Count	121	148	75	55	399
		% within Monthly Grocery Spending	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

### APPENDIX 4.6

**The store layout makes it easy to locate clothing items on sale \* How many times in a month do you go shopping? Crosstabulation**

			How many times in a month do you go shopping?					Total
			Once a month	Twice a month	3 times a month	4 times a month	More than 4 times a month	
The store layout makes it easy to locate clothing items on sale	Disagree	Count	14	15	9	9	9	56
		% within How many times in a month do you go shopping?	15,1%	13,0%	13,0%	20,5%	11,5%	14,0%
	Neutral	Count	35	29	10	8	11	93
		% within How many times in a month do you go shopping?	37,6%	25,2%	14,5%	18,2%	14,1%	23,3%
	Agree	Count	44	71	50	27	58	250
		% within How many times in a month do you go shopping?	47,3%	61,7%	72,5%	61,4%	74,4%	62,7%
Total		Count	93	115	69	44	78	399
		% within How many times in a month do you go shopping?	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

## APPENDIX 4.7

### I am able to shop without unnecessary noise in the store \* Monthly Grocery Spending Crosstabulation

			Monthly Grocery Spending				Total
			Less than R1000	R1001 - R2500	R2501 - R5000	More than R5000	
I am able to shop without unnecessary noise in the store	Disagree	Count	29	21	14	2	66
		% within Monthly Grocery Spending	24,0%	14,2%	18,7%	3,6%	16,5%
	Neutral	Count	30	36	13	12	91
		% within Monthly Grocery Spending	24,8%	24,3%	17,3%	21,8%	22,8%
	Agree	Count	62	91	48	41	242
		% within Monthly Grocery Spending	51,2%	61,5%	64,0%	74,5%	60,7%
Total	Count	121	148	75	55	399	
	% within Monthly Grocery Spending	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	

## APPENDIX 4.8

### This store has convenient shopping hours \* Distance to closest store Crosstabulation

			Distance to closest store				Total
			1 km and less	1.01 km - 5 km	5.01 km - 10km	More than 10km	
This store has convenient shopping hours	Disagree	Count	10	16	4	2	32
		% within Distance to closest store	6,5%	9,2%	7,4%	11,1%	8,0%
	Neutral	Count	15	36	11	6	68
		% within Distance to closest store	9,7%	20,8%	20,4%	33,3%	17,0%
	Agree	Count	129	121	39	10	299
		% within Distance to closest store	83,8%	69,9%	72,2%	55,6%	74,9%
Total	Count	154	173	54	18	399	
	% within Distance to closest store	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	

## APPENDIX 4.9

### This store has convenient shopping hours \* Education Crosstabulation

			Education			Total
			Lower than matric	Matriculated	Post matriculated	
This store has convenient shopping hours	Disagree	Count	3	16	13	32
		% within Education	11,1%	11,5%	5,6%	8,0%
	Neutral	Count	9	24	35	68
		% within Education	33,3%	17,3%	15,0%	17,0%
	Agree	Count	15	99	185	299
		% within Education	55,6%	71,2%	79,4%	74,9%
Total		Count	27	139	233	399
		% within Education	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

## APPENDIX 4.10

### This store has convenient shopping hours \* How many times in a month do you go shopping? Crosstabulation

			How many times in a month do you go shopping?					Total
			Once a month	Twice a month	3 times a month	4 times a month	More than 4 times a month	
This store has convenient shopping hours	Disagree	Count	7	10	7	3	5	32
		% within How many times in a month do you go shopping?	7,5%	8,7%	10,1%	6,8%	6,4%	8,0%
	Neutral	Count	27	17	11	9	4	68
		% within How many times in a month do you go shopping?	29,0%	14,8%	15,9%	20,5%	5,1%	17,0%
	Agree	Count	59	88	51	32	69	299
		% within How many times in a month do you go shopping?	63,4%	76,5%	73,9%	72,7%	88,5%	74,9%
Total		Count	93	115	69	44	78	399
		% within How many times in a month do you go shopping?	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

### APPENDIX 4.11

**This store has a fair return policy \* Education Crosstabulation**

			Education			Total
			Lower than matric	Matriculated	Post matriculated	
This store has a fair return policy	Disagree	Count	7	18	18	43
		% within Education	25,9%	12,9%	7,7%	10,8%
	Neutral	Count	14	38	63	115
		% within Education	51,9%	27,3%	27,0%	28,8%
	Agree	Count	6	83	152	241
		% within Education	22,2%	59,7%	65,2%	60,4%
Total		Count	27	139	233	399
		% within Education	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

### APPENDIX 4.12

**This store has a fair return policy \* How many times in a month do you go shopping? Crosstabulation**

			How many times in a month do you go shopping?					Total
			Once a month	Twice a month	3 times a month	4 times a month	More than 4 times a month	
This store has a fair return policy	Disagree	Count	11	11	10	5	6	43
		% within How many times in a month do you go shopping?	11,8%	9,6%	14,5%	11,4%	7,7%	10,8%
	Neutral	Count	33	35	16	19	12	115
		% within How many times in a month do you go shopping?	35,5%	30,4%	23,2%	43,2%	15,4%	28,8%
	Agree	Count	49	69	43	20	60	241
		% within How many times in a month do you go shopping?	52,7%	60,0%	62,3%	45,5%	76,9%	60,4%
Total		Count	93	115	69	44	78	399
		% within How many times in a month do you go shopping?	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

### APPENDIX 4.13

The store personnel's attitude is always friendly \* Education Crosstabulation

			Education			Total
			Lower than matric	Matriculated	Post matriculated	
The store personnel's attitude is always friendly	Disagree	Count	4	24	18	46
		% within Education	14,8%	17,3%	7,7%	11,5%
	Neutral	Count	8	45	61	114
		% within Education	29,6%	32,4%	26,2%	28,6%
	Agree	Count	15	70	154	239
		% within Education	55,6%	50,4%	66,1%	59,9%
Total		Count	27	139	233	399
		% within Education	100.0	100.0	100,0%	100,0%

### APPENDIX 4.14

The store ensures good security for my well-being \* How many times in a month do you go shopping? Crosstabulation

			How many times in a month do you go shopping?					Total
			Once a month	Twice a month	3 times a month	4 times a month	More than 4 times a month	
The store ensures good security for my well-being	Disagree	Count	11	7	4	5	4	31
		% within How many times in a month do you go shopping?	11,8%	6,1%	5,8%	11,4%	5,1%	7,8%
	Neutral	Count	42	32	18	8	14	114
		% within How many times in a month do you go shopping?	45,2%	27,8%	26,1%	18,2%	17,9%	28,6%
	Agree	Count	40	76	47	31	60	254
		% within How many times in a month do you go shopping?	43,0%	66,1%	68,1%	70,5%	76,9%	63,7%
Total		Count	93	115	69	44	78	399
		% within How many times in a month do you go shopping?	100.0%	100.0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

### APPENDIX 4.15

#### Continue shopping at the same supermarket? \* Distance to closest store Crosstabulation

			Distance to closest store				Total
			1 km and less	1.01 km - 5 km	5.01 km - 10km	More than 10km	
Continue shopping at the same supermarket?	Yes	Count	143	162	48	13	366
		% within Distance to closest store	92,9%	93,6%	88,9%	72,2%	91,7%
	No	Count	11	11	6	5	33
		% within Distance to closest store	7,1%	6,4%	11,1%	27,8%	8,3%
Total		Count	154	173	54	18	399
		% within Distance to closest store	100.0%	100.0%	100,0%	100,0%	100.0%

### APPENDIX 4.16

#### Quality (of products, store layout) \* Education Crosstabulation

			Education			Total
			Lower than matric	Matriculated	Post matriculated	
Quality (of products, store layout)	Important	Count	20	126	207	353
		% within Education	74,1%	90,6%	88,8%	88,5%
	Necessary	Count	6	13	25	44
		% within Education	22,2%	9,4%	10,7%	11,0%
	Not very important	Count	1	0	1	2
		% within Education	3,7%	0,0%	,4%	,5%
Total		Count	27	139	233	399
		% within Education	100.0%	100.0%	100,0%	100,0%

### APPENDIX 4.17

#### Proper signage \* Education Crosstabulation

			Education			Total
			Lower than matric	Matriculated	Post matriculated	
Proper signage	Important	Count	17	106	183	306
		% within Education	63,0%	76,3%	78,5%	76,7%
	Necessary	Count	4	28	36	68
		% within Education	14,8%	20,1%	15,5%	17,0%
	Not very important	Count	6	5	14	25
		% within Education	22,2%	3,6%	6,0%	6,3%
Total		Count	27	139	233	399
		% within Education	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

### APPENDIX 4.18

#### Proper signage \* How many times in a month do you go shopping? Crosstabulation

		How many times in a month do you go shopping?					Total
		Once a month	Twice a month	3 times a month	4 times a month	More than 4 times a month	
Proper signage	Important	61	90	58	39	58	306
		65,6%	78,3%	84,1%	88,6%	74,4%	76,7%
	Necessary	27	17	5	3	16	68
		29,0%	14,8%	7,2%	6,8%	20,5%	17,0%
	Not very important	5	8	6	2	4	25
		5,4%	7,0%	8,7%	4,5%	5,1%	6,3%
Total		93	115	69	44	78	399
		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

