

**Employee Commitment to Customer Service In South Africa**

**By**

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## ABSTRACT

It is widely recognised that today's retail environment is highly competitive. For an organisation to achieve consistently above average market performance it must create a sustainable differential advantage. That is, it must create sustainable superior value for its customers. Unfortunately, retailers often offer the same assortments at similar prices and have identical operating hours, and location is not as important as it used to be.

Against this background the prominent way for retailers to differentiate is increasingly to pursue a service oriented business strategy. The desire to create superior value for customers and sustainable competitive advantage drives a business to create and maintain the culture that will produce the necessary behaviours. This research examines Peccei and Rosenthal's (1997) model of employees' commitment to customer service.

In order to assess employee commitment to customer service in terms of the willingness of employees to exert themselves on behalf of customers, and their capacity to engage in customers improvement, as well as to determine the relationship between the biographical variables and employee commitment to customer service, a field study was conducted at a store of a major retail organisation.

The survey covered 100 staff employed at the particular store. The research instrument, a self-completion questionnaire was distributed to all staff. A total of 53 completed questionnaires were returned making for a response rate of 53 percent. Data has been analysed by means of Correlation analysis, t Test, Analysis of variance (Anova) and frequency distribution.

Overall Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) general model of commitment to customer service has shown to provide a useful basis for explaining variations in levels of employees' commitment to customer service. Some of the specific links hypothesised in the model failed to find confirmation in the data. In general though, the results of the analysis provided good support for the model with a number of both willingness and capacity variables emerging as strong predictors of commitment to customer service.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### ***1.1 Background***

Retailing no longer involves just growth or expansion into new product, consumer segments or geographic areas. Organisations are now learning to shift their emphasis to managing under conditions of modest, zero or for some organisations, under negative growth. This is to a large extent has been the result of changing consumer behaviour, the emergence of new competitors, global economic recession, and rapid technological advances in the retailing industries.

These pressures of business today make many people think that the only thing that counts is financial success, i.e. being the investor of choice. In successful organisations everyone's energy is focused on the "Triple bottom line" as the target. That is, if the organisation has been built the right way, it will be the Provider of Choice, Employer of Choice, and Investor of Choice. The leaders of these organisations believe that people, their customers and business partners are as important as their bottom line. These companies realise that profit is the applause you get for taking care of your customers and creating a motivated environment for your people.

### ***1.2 Motivation for the study***

Despite its importance, this topic has been given little attention in the academic literature. In the case of retailing, services are designed more to augment the core offering or add value rather than represent the core offering itself? The limited and fragmented research on retail services focuses on specific areas such as quality issues and store image.

Thus given this void in the literature, the bases of the study would be to approach retail services as a strategic perspective by focusing on the service orientation of a retailer's business strategy. If a retailer decides to strategically augment its products with services, it is essential that the retailer make this change systematically with a long-term orientation.

The study would involve examining one level of service orientation, i.e. individual level. In this research stream, a service orientation is treated as a personality measure whereby certain people are more service orientated than others.

Before developing HRM policies and practices with regard to performance management and reorientation of employee behaviour, it is important to understand the drivers and motivators (i.e. the bases) of individual level behaviour with regards to employee commitment to customer services.

In order to attain this information, this research would be adopting Peccei and Rosenthal's (1997) tested model on the antecedents of employee commitment to customer service.

The research would involve an employee survey. The survey will cover all employees, including top management to part time employees. The research instrument would be a self-completion questionnaire, which is to be distributed to all staff in each of the stores. This survey would also enable us to ascertain, the extent to which customer orientation is embraced throughout the organisation, employees understanding of customer service and the influence of supervisory support, job autonomy and job routinization, and resource availability on employees commitment to customer service.

The world has changed in such a way that today the buyer, not the seller, is sitting in the driver's seat. Currently one does not have to convince anybody that the customer is king. Competition is everywhere. People are realising that their organisations will go nowhere without the loyalty and commitment of their customers.

It is widely recognised that today's retail environment is highly competitive. For an organisation to achieve consistently above normal market performance it must create a sustainable differential advantage. That is, it must create sustainable superior value for its customers. Unfortunately, retailers often offer the same assortments at similar prices and trade similar operating hours, and location is not as important as it used to be.

Against this background the prominent way for retailers to differentiate is increasingly to pursue a service oriented business strategy. The desire to create superior value for customers and sustainable competitive advantage drives a business to create and maintain the culture that will produce the necessary behaviours.

Market orientation is the organisation culture that most effectively and efficiently creates the necessary behaviours for the creation of superior value for buyers and, thus, continuous superior performance for the business. One of the behavioural components of market orientation is customer orientation.

### ***1.3 Objective of the study***

The specific objectives of this study are the following:

- a) To determine the extent to which employees are committed to customer service
- b) To ascertain the extent to which employees are willing to engage in customer service
- c) To specify the capacity of employees to engage in customer service
- d) To examine the relationship between the willingness variables and the capacity variables and commitment to customer service respectively
- e) To determine the relationship between the willingness variables and the capacity variables
- f) To examine the influence of the biographic variables and commitment to customer service.

## **1.4 Hypotheses**

The research aims to determine if:

- a) There is a significant relationship between the capacity variables (employee knowledge and competence, empowerment, and resource availability) and commitment to customer service
- b) There is a significant relationship between the willingness variables (affective, normative, calculative, and altruistic commitment) and commitment to customer service
- c) There is a significant relationship between the willingness variables and capacity variables
- d) There is be a significant difference in commitment to customer service among the biographical variables

## **1.5 Limitations of the study**

Minimum supporting literature has been a major limitation. Most of the quality related literature involves the measurement of retail service quality, and these studies have generally adapted the SERVQUAL scale to store environment. Most of the image related literature focuses on retail services as one component that constitutes retail store image.

Gaining employee cooperation in participating in the survey was trying. Employees were initially suspicious and concerned as they felt that the information may be used against them.

There was difficulty communicating with employees, as the employees had minimal understanding of the English language. The questionnaire had to be explained in simpler language.

## **1.6 Structure of the study**

Chapter 2 of the study will examine literature relating to customer service. This chapter will examine the customer service process, reviewing various models of customer service.

Chapter 3 will examine literature relating to commitment to customer service. In this chapter we examine commitment and review the model and various dimension of the model on commitment to customer service.

Chapter 4 is the research methodology chapter. Where in we state the objectives and sub objectives of the study. We examine the research design.

Chapter 5 reviews the presentation of the data. This chapter presents the findings of the data analysis.

Chapter 6 is the discussion of the findings of the study. The findings of the analysis is compared with supporting literature. This is followed by the final chapter which suggest recommendations based on the discussion and findings of the study.

## **1.7 Conclusion**

This study aims to understand the drivers and motivators of the individual behaviour with regards to employee to commitment to customer service, with the aim of creating a service oriented strategy to enable to organisation to gain competitive advantage in the fast moving consumer good industry. This should assist the organisation to become a destination store.

This ultimately will enable the organisation to be the provider of choice, the employer of choice, and investor of choice.

The following chapter examines literature relating to customer service.

## Chapter 2

### Customer service

#### ***2.1 Introduction***

Customer service has long been acknowledged as an imperative strategic retailing weapon, particularly in developing defensive marketing strategies (Fisk, Brown & Bitner, 1993). Berry (1986) has recommended that many successful retailers differentiate themselves, not through the goods they sell, since the goods sold are often nearly identical, but through the service they offer. The positive perceptions generated by a store offering a high standard of service may be transferred to perceptions of the quality of the service offered (Kerin, Jain and Howard, 1992). Davidow (1988: 18), in discussing the significance of service to corporate survival, defined service as "...those things which, when added to a product, increase its utility or value to the customer."

In this chapter, the study attempts firstly to briefly understand the customer service process in terms of service quality, value and satisfaction. The second sphere of the chapter investigates the employees capacity (i.e. influence of job characteristic) to engage in continuous improvement and respond flexibly and effectively to customer requirements.

#### ***2.2 Definition of Customer service***

Turban et al. (2002) define customer service as a series of activities that are designed to augment the level of customer satisfaction, that is, the feeling that a product or service has met the customer's expectation.

An examination of services marketing literature reveals several waves of conceptual research.

Although there are many areas of pursuit, these waves seem to begin with the study of service quality, then carry through to satisfaction research, which has more recently given way to the study of service value. Numerous studies, such as Cronin, Brady, and Hult (2000), Athanassopoulos (2000), Fornell, Johnson, Anderson, Cha, & Brynat (1996), and Hallowell (1996), have endeavoured to model these links.

Hallowell (1996: 29) argues that "customer satisfaction is the result of a customer's perception of the value received...where value equals perceived service quality relative to price...". Fornell et al.(1996: 9) concludes " the first determinant of overall customer satisfaction is perceived value...". Athanassopoulos (2000: 192) recognised customer satisfaction as "being highly associated with value and ... is based, conceptually, on the amalgamation of service quality attributes with such attributes as price...".

Cronin, et al. (2000) presented a model highlighting the extent to which service employees' customer orientation is related to consumers' perceptions of overall service quality. Their study has pointed out that quality, value and satisfaction directly influences behavioural intentions, even when the effects of all three constructs are considered concurrently.

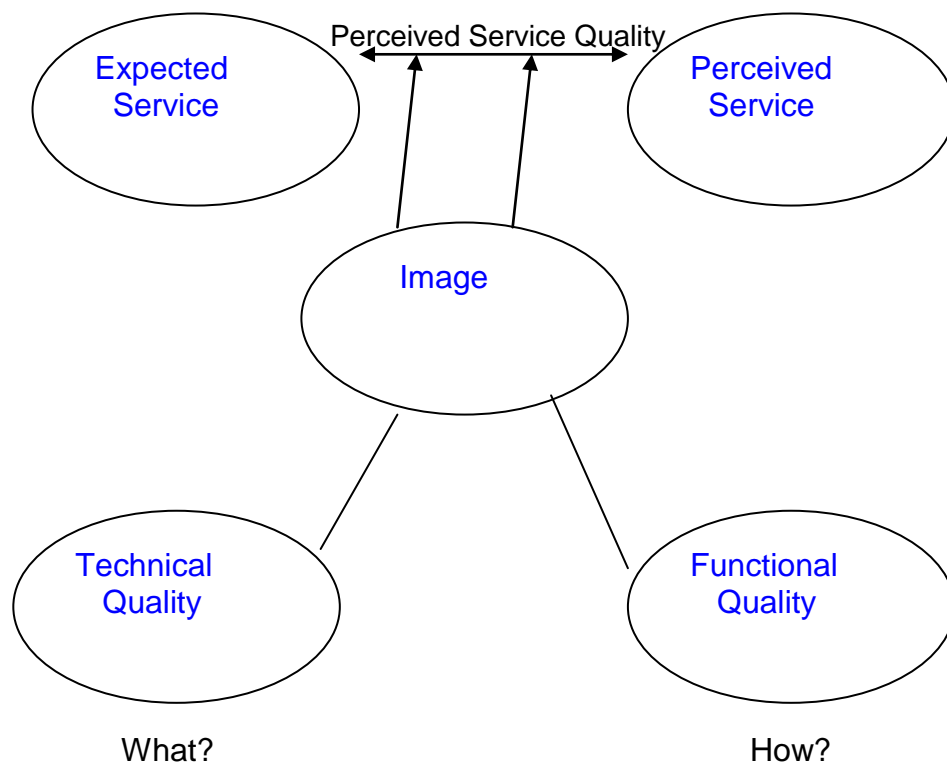
### 2.2.1 Service quality

Service quality is "the consumer's overall impression of the relative inferiority/superiority of the organisation and its services" (Bitner & Hubbert 1994: 77). The basis of service quality theory lies in the product quality and customer satisfaction literature. The role of quality is complex and not only does quality affect perceptions of value and satisfaction; it also influences behavioural intentions directly. At the heart of quality service research are two competing perspectives, i.e. The Nordic Model (Gronroos, 1984) and the SERVQUAL Model (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988), which formed the foundation for later research, i.e. The Hierarchical Model (Brady & Cronin, 2001).

(a) The Nordic Model

The Nordic Model defines service quality using overall categorical terms. The model suggests that quality results from a comparison of perceived service with expected service and identifies two service quality dimensions i.e. technical quality and functional quality as illustrated below in Figure 2.1.

Figure. 2.1 The Nordic Model



Source; Gronroos, C.(1984). A service quality model and its marketing implications, European Journal of marketing, 18 (4), 36-44

Technical quality reflects the outcome of the service act, or what the customer receives in the service encounter. This is considered as the quality of the product delivered. It is what the customer is left with when the production process and buyer-seller interactions have ended.



However, the technical dimension does not account for customers' total evaluation of the service interaction. Customers are also influenced by the way the technical quality, or the outcome or end result of the service encounter is transferred to them. As such, customers are influenced by how they receive the service.

Functional quality represents how the service is delivered, and defines customers' perceptions of the interactions that take place during service delivery. It incorporates the more subjective service quality and service-scape aspects of the service encounter.

Although the Technical/Functional Quality model has not been used or tested to the extent of the SERVQUAL model, it has received some research in recent years. Measuring service quality in the area of architectural design, for instance, Baker and Lamb (1993) suggest that, for evaluative purposes, customers tend to rely primarily on functional-based dimensions of service quality, as they may not have the knowledge and/or skill to evaluate more technical-based dimensions. Likewise, Higgins and Ferguson (1991) report that, although clients of an accountancy service evaluated both functional and technical dimensions of service quality, the functional dimensions seemed to carry the most weight. In the case of a pizza delivery service, on the other hand, Richard and Allaway (1993) found that both technical and functional dimensions explained more of the variation in customer choice behaviour than functional measures alone, as the technical dimension is easy to evaluate for a pizza delivery service.

#### (b) The SERVQUAL Model

Just over a decade ago, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) initiated a research stream that many consider to be the most comprehensive, prominent and the most widely used investigation into service quality. The SERVQUAL model defines service quality using descriptive terms.

The authors of this model proposed that the consumer's opinion of quality are formed by an internal comparison of performance with expectations. Good service means that the customers' perceptions of service performance meet or exceed their expectations of what the service firm should provide.

The SERVQUAL instrument was based on the gap theory (Parasuraman et al., 1985) and propose that a consumer's perception of service quality is a function of the difference between his/her expectations about the performance of a general class of service providers and his/her assessment of the actual performance of a specific firm within that class (Cronin and Taylor, 1992) i.e. the model views service quality as the gap between the expected level of service and customer perception of the level received.

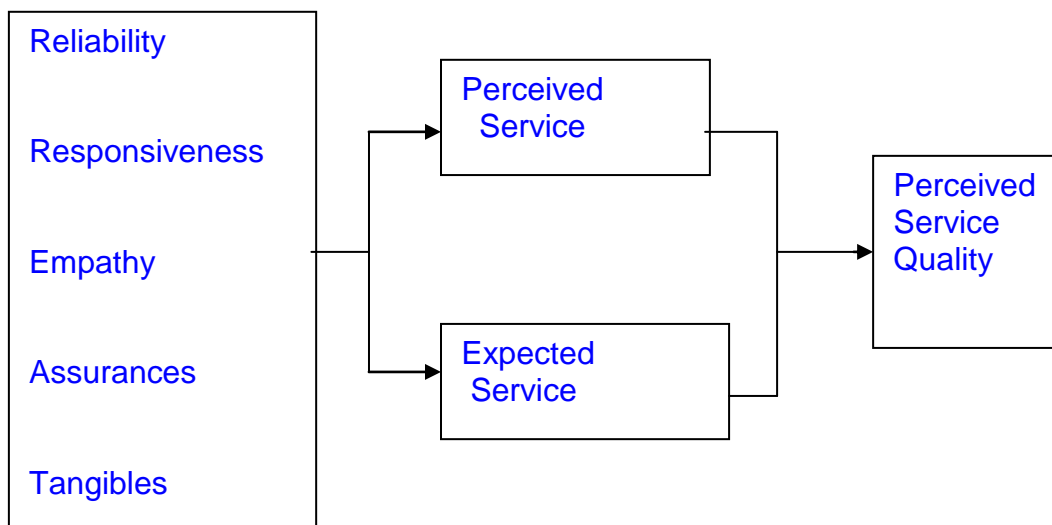
Based on Parasuraman et al.'s (1988) conceptualisation of service quality (noted above), the original SERVQUAL instrument included two 22-item sections that intended to measure (a) customer expectations for various aspects of service quality, and (b) customer perceptions of the service they actually received from the focal service organisation (Parasuraman et al., 1988). The results of the initial published application of the SERVQUAL instrument indicated that five dimensions of service quality emerged across a variety of services (Parasuraman et al., 1988). These dimensions include:

- Reliability - involves consistency of performance dependability. It means that the organisation performs the service right and honours its promise
- Responsiveness - represents the willingness or readiness of employees to provide service and also entails timeliness of service.
- Assurance - includes elements such as security, credibility, competence and communication.
- Empathy - includes elements such as approachability, courtesy, and understanding or knowing the customer.

- Tangibility characteristics of the service experience - includes the physical evidence of the service, such as, facilities, appearance of personnel, tools or equipment used and physical representations.

Below is an illustration of the SERVQUAL Model

Figure. 2.2 The SERVQUAL Model



Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Berry, L. L.(1988). SERVQUAL: A Multiple-Item Scale for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality, Journal of retailing, 64(1), 12-40

The SERVQUAL scale has been widely used to measure service quality in different service contexts, such as professional services (Freeman & Dart, 1993), health care (Lam, 1997), tourism (Tribe & Snaith, 1998), business school (Pariseau & McDaniel, 1997) and information systems (Kettinger & Lee, 1994). It has also been widely tested for its validity and reliability (Babakus & Boller, 1992; Bolton & Drew, 1991; Parasuraman et al., 1991, Cronin & Taylor, 1992,1994).

Although the SERVQUAL instrument has been applied in the study of service quality for many different types of service, it has been the subject of a number of criticisms. The universal use of SERVQUAL in different service industries has also been questioned.

Babakus and Boller (1992) used the SERVQUAL scale to measure service quality in an electric and gas utility company. They found that the proposed five-factor structure of SERVQUAL is problematic and doubted the suitability of the SERVQUAL scale for measuring quality across a range of services. The applicability of SERVQUAL across different cultures is also an issue. Because SERVQUAL was developed in a Western environment and due to cultural differences, it is likely that cultural factors will influence its applicability.

Supporting research studies such as Donthu and Yoo (1998) and Mattila (1999) has, recognised that as a result of cultural orientation, consumers varied in both their overall expectations with regard to service quality and their expectation of each of their service quality dimensions. Therefore suggesting that the five SERVQUAL dimensions may not be universal across all services, and that it is probably unnecessary to administer the expectation items every time SERVQUAL is administered.

Cronin and Taylor (1992), for instance, concluded that a psychometrically superior assessment of service quality could be obtained through the SERVQUAL performance items alone, rather than the expectations-performance methodology originally used by Parasuraman et al. (1988).

Most recently, researchers have begun incorporating other constructs and measures along with the SERVQUAL dimensions in order to extend and improve the explanatory power of this model. For instance, Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1994) suggest that the financial effects of SERVQUAL are more robust if one considers the immediate behavioural intentions of service quality as intervening between service quality and financial gains or losses.

Both the Nordic and SERVQUAL perspectives draw attention to important aspects of service quality, but neither fully captures the construct. Arguably, one of the most important if not obvious differences between the above two quality models is the lack of a technical-oriented dimension in the SERVQUAL model (Lassar, Manolis, & Winsor, 2000). It is probable that the lack of fit in the SERVQUAL model may be in part due to the fact that there are no SERVQUAL items addressing specifically, what is being provided as opposed to how it is being provided. This explanation relates to a Heskett, Jones, Loveman and Sasser (1997) research, which insinuate that the SERVQUAL dimensions of service quality are comparable to a "process-type" of service quality. Process quality, in turn, is associated with Gronroos' (1984) functional quality. This gap in research results in a need for research that reconsiders the various dimensions of service quality.

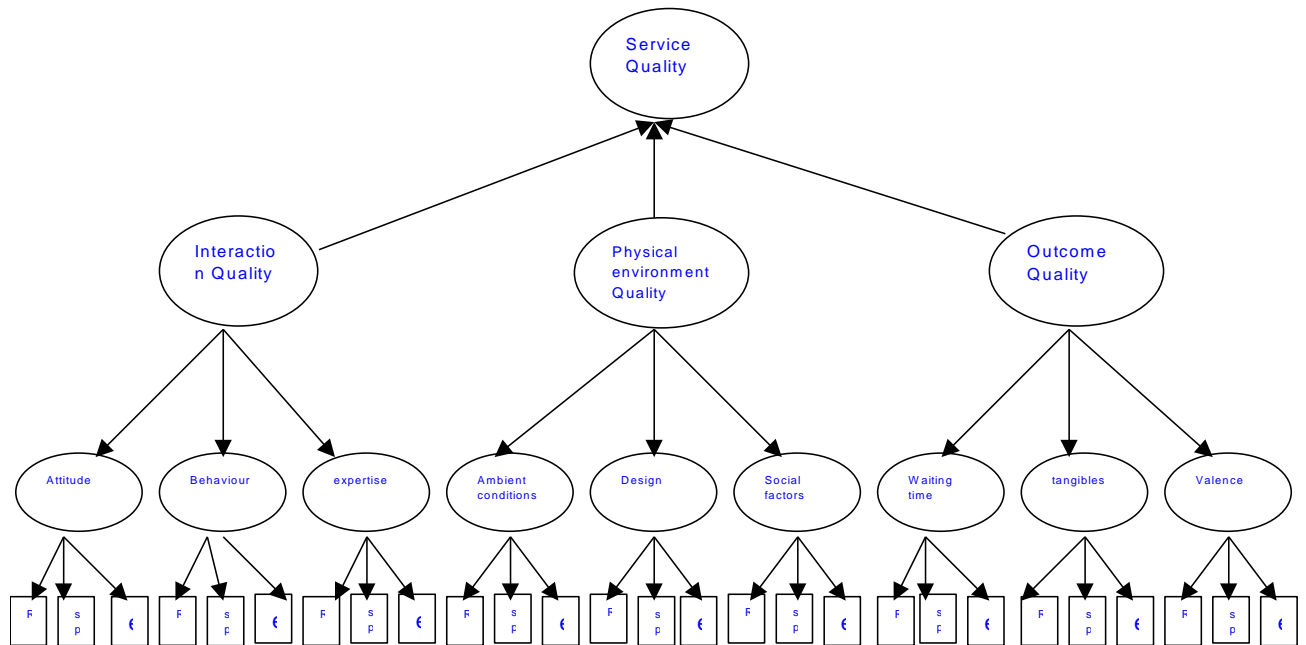
#### (c) The Hierarchical model

Brady and Cronin (2001) developed a model that recognises the complexity of both the Nordic and SERVQUAL models and suggest that customers form their service quality perception on the basis of an evaluation of performance at multiple levels and ultimately combine these evaluations to arrive at an overall service quality perception. Brady and Cronin's (2001) hierarchical model addresses three basic issues:

- a) What defines service quality.
- b) How important it is where the service experience takes place.
- c) How service quality perceptions are formed.

This is illustrated by way of Figure 2.3

Figure.2.3 Brady and Cronin (2001) Hierarchical Model



Brady, M. K., & Cronin, J. J.(2001). Some new thoughts on conceptualising perceived service quality: A hierarchical approach Journal of marketing, 65, July, 34-49

The model portrays three primary dimensions. The first two primary dimensions, i.e. outcome quality and interaction quality were adapted from the Nordic School, in particular, Gronroos (1984) seminal idea that service quality is measured according to customer evaluations of outcomes as well as interactions with service employees i.e. these dimensions defines service quality. The third dimension, i.e. environment quality, reflects the influence of the service environment on quality perceptions. Although this dimension is not as widely studied as the other two constructs, there is evidence that the Environment also affects customers' behavioural intentions (e.g., Baker and Cameron 1996; Baker, Grewal, and Levy 1992; Bitner 1990, 1992; Donovan, Rossiter, Marcolyn, Nedale 1994; Hightower 1997).

For example, Donovan et al. (1994) found that in retail settings, customers' behavioural intentions are directly influenced by their perceptions of the service environment. Kotler (1973: 48) states that the "atmosphere of the place is [perhaps] more influential than the product itself in the purchase decision." Baker (1986), Baker and Cameron (1996) conceptually study three elements of the environment --ambient (background conditions that exist below the level of the customer's immediate awareness), design (stimuli that exist at the forefront of the customer's awareness), and social factors (considered the "people" element of the environment)--and propose that these elements are related to service encounter outcomes. Bitner (1992: 57) suggests that an organisation's environment "may in fact have a strong impact on customers' perceptions of the service experience." She continues to argue that because of services' high intangibility, customers must often rely on altruistic cues such as the environment to infer quality and their subsequent behavioural intentions.

The model suggests that each of the primary dimensions of service quality i.e. interaction, environment, and outcome, has three sub-dimensions, that is, customers base their assessment of three corresponding sub factors. The combination of all these, make up a customer's overall perception of the quality of service. In order to refine the definition of the sub-dimensions, Brady and Cronin (2001) used Parasuraman et al's (1988) SERVQUAL five factor structures. The factors, reliability, responsiveness and empathy of service provider are positioned as modifiers of the nine sub-dimensions. The sub-dimensions provide the necessary foundation for answering the question of what needs to be reliable, responsive and empathetic, and the SERVQUAL dimensions capture how consumers differentiate performance on these dimensions. That is they define how the sub-dimensions are evaluated.

Of particular interest to the current study would be interaction quality. As suggested by Surprenant and Solomon (1987) service quality is more the result of processes than outcomes.

The interpersonal interactions that take place during service delivery often have the most effect on service quality perceptions (Harline & Ferrell, 1996). These interactions have been identified as the employee - customer interface (Harline & Ferrell, 1996) and the key element in a service exchange. Brady and Cronin (2001) indicate that three distinct factors make up the customer's perceptions of encounter specific interaction quality, i.e. attitude, behaviour and expertise. This is supported by Czepiel, Solomon, & Surprenant (1985), Bitner (1990), and Gronroos (1990).

### 2.1.2 Satisfaction

Satisfaction is generally agreed to be a postpurchase and postuse evaluation (Hunt, 1977; Oliver, 1981). Hunt (1977: 459) describes satisfaction as "an evaluation of an emotion". Kotler (2000: 36) describes satisfaction as "a person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to his or her expectation". The above suggests that satisfaction reflects the degree to which a consumer believes that the possession and / or use of a service evokes positive feelings (Rust, and Oliver, 1994). Hence, satisfaction is a function of perceived performance and expectations. That is the expectancy - confirmation framework, which suggests that satisfaction is a function of the degree to which expectations match, exceed, or fall short of product or service performance. Satisfaction is therefore thought to be an immediate antecedent to quality judgement and then to loyalty. However, research by Oliver (1993), Spreng & Mackoy's (1996) also suggests that perceived service quality is an antecedent to satisfaction.

The relationship between service quality and satisfaction is the subject of on going and considerable debate in the marketing literature. The difference and association between service quality and customer satisfaction remains at the forefront of many academic- and practitioner-oriented research studies (Anderson and Fornell, 1994; Brown and Swartz, 1989; Spreng and Mackoy, 1996).



Many consumer satisfaction studies conducted in service settings agree that the two constructs are conceptually distinct (Fornell 1992, Bitner, 1990; Boulding, Kalra, Staelin, & Zeithaml, 1993). Service quality - as determined by its various components - is a partial determinant of satisfaction (Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988). There exist a number of research studies to support the quality/satisfaction causal order. However, the discussion is limited to two recent and highly relevant studies.

Cronin and Taylor (1992) tested, among other things, the casual relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. They noted that marketing researchers are not in agreement in terms of the causal order of these constructs, and suggest that empirical justification is necessary to determine the true nature of this relationship. The authors report ultimately that, according to their analyses, perceived service quality leads to satisfaction.

### 2.1.3 Service Value

The most common definition of value is the trade-off between quality and price (e.g., Cravens, Holland, Lamb & Moncrieff, 1988; Manroe, 1990, Zeithaml, 1988 Porter, 1990; and Sweeney, Soutar, &, Johnson, 1999), i.e. a value-for-money conceptualisation. The two components, i.e. quality and price have different and differential effects on perceived value for money.

Zeithaml (1988) argued that some consumers perceive value when there is a low price, others perceive value when there is a balance between quality and price. Hence, for different consumers, the components of perceived value might be differentially weighted.

Other authors have also suggested that viewing value as a trade-off between only quality and price is too simplistic (Schechter, 1984, Bolton & Drew, 1991). Porter (1990: 37) for example, talked about providing "superior value to the buyer in terms of product quality, special features, or after-sale service."

These views suggest that existing value constructs are too narrow and that dimensions other than price and quality would increase the construct's usefulness. Sweeney's (2001) PERVAL scale demonstrates that consumers assess products, not just in functional terms of expected performance, value for money and versatility; but also in terms of the enjoyment or pleasure derived from the product (emotional value) and the social consequences of what the product communicates to others (social value).

The move to value in retailing seems to be a global phenomenon (Sweeney, 2001). Research has found that retail service quality plays a significant role in the creation of value perceptions (Sweeney et al., 1999). If it is true that retail customers are "value-driven" (Levy, 1999), then managers need to understand what customer's value and where they should focus their attention to achieve this needed market place advantage (Woodruff, 1997).

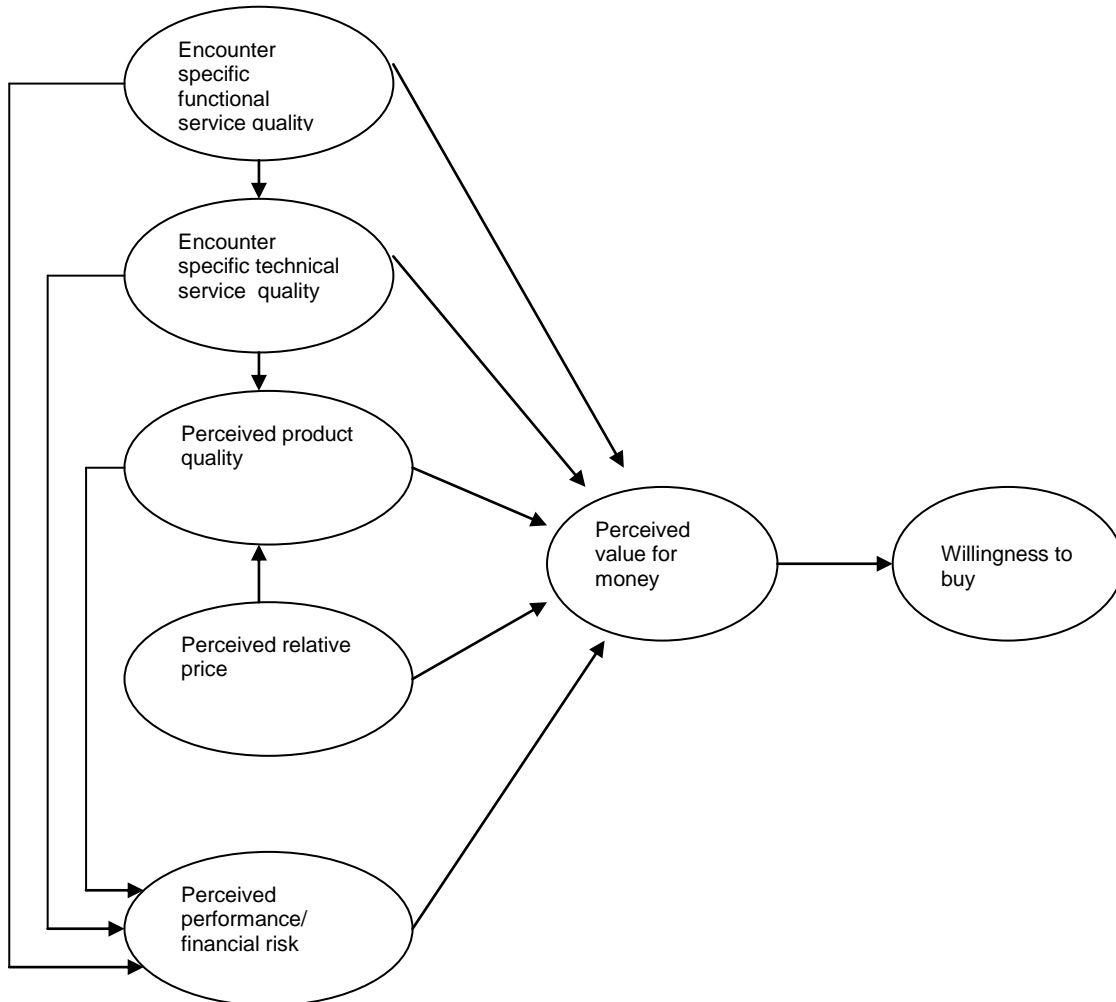
Sweeney et al. (1999: 100) model of "perceived value identifies perceived value to be an appropriate mediator of the quality, price and risk components (antecedents of perceived value) and willingness to buy (the outcome of perceived value".

The model includes the traditional antecedents of product quality and relative price (Manroe, 1990), in addition to encounter specific quality and perceived performance / financial risk.

These additions are of particular importance to the retail channel, as they serve to include the retailer directly in the process of creating product value.

Below is an illustration of the conceptual model of perceived value.

Figure. 2.4 Conceptual model of perceived value



Sweeney, J. C., Soutar, G. N., Johnson, W. L.(1999). The role of perceived risk in the quality-vlue relationship: A study in a retail environment, Journal of Retailing, 75(1), 77-105

The results of research by Sweeney et al. (1999) indicated that perceived risk, as measured by elements of performance and financial risk, has a more powerful, direct effect on perceived value than the traditional antecedents of perceived relative price or perceived product quality.

Although relative price and product quality remain of importance, these results indicate that more attention needs to be paid to the issue of how consumers' perceive risk in the future.

The study also indicated that technical service quality, identified as salespersons' knowledge, plays a particularly important role in reducing risk perceptions. This occurs largely through the offering of favourable product knowledge that led to positive product quality perceptions. The implication is that a store with good quality service is likely to stock and recommend quality products that will perform well over time.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

Based on the above discussion, the study reflects and concurs with Peccei & Rosenthal's (1997) research, that a clear understanding of customer service performance requirements, a strong sense of job competence, supportive supervision, job autonomy, and resource adequacy are hypothesised to have a positive impact on commitment to customer service, While job Routinisation and job pressure is expected to have a negative effect on commitment to customer service

The preceding chapter in an attempt to understand employee commitment to customer service examines firstly the concept of commitment and the antecedents of commitment and secondly examines employee commitment to customer service.

## Chapter 3

### Commitment to customer service

#### **3.1. Introduction**

New forms of organisational structures characterised by wider autonomy and more skilled employees are taxing managers to strive harder to promote and maintain a harmonious work environment. The consequence for management is that organisations should strive to establish a work environment in which there is genuine "mutual commitment" (Kochan and Dyer, 1993). This, is based on the assumption that when employees are loyal, they will work harder and stay with the organisation longer.

Management today attempt to stimulate commitment on the part of their employees by using packages of rewards, and employment benefits, in combination with changes in the quality of the work environment. This is supported in Brewer's (1993) research, wherein, it is highlighted that employee involvement within the organisation is key in managing employee commitment. Though managers assume that nurturing commitment pays off, and are increasingly aware of this difficult balance, it is still the exception to find companies monitoring the key factors which influence employee performance significantly.

The multi-faceted nature of the commitment construct poses significant definitional, modelling and measurement problems, making human resource strategies difficult to formulate. As a result, companies intent on following through with "meaningful human resource management" (HRM) tend to make "lucky" judgements about what actions will encourage commitment (Storey, 1993).

In contrast, those with a strategic approach involving widespread use of a range of HRM practices report the best results consistently under headings such as employee relations and performance outcomes (Guest and Hogue, 1994: 11).

Therefore, this chapter attempts to understand employee commitment to customer service by examining, firstly, the concept of commitment and the antecedents of commitment and, secondly, employee commitment to customer service.

### ***3.2 Introduction to Commitment***

The concept of commitment to the organisation has been evolving for at least 30 years. In the preliminary phase, exchange theory put forward in Becker (1960), Blau (1964) and Etzioni (1961) formed a foundation for the topic. The exchange theory posits that all relationships are formed by the use of a subjective cost – benefit analysis and the comparison of alternatives. For example when a person perceives that the costs of a relationship outweighing the perceived benefits, then the theory predicts that the person will choose to leave the relationship (Miller, 2004).

Kelman (1958) distinguished between commitment based on:

- compliance - the individual adopts specific patterns of behaviour and attitudes in return for specific rewards and to avoid costs associated with quitting/withdrawal from the organisation,
- identification - where attitudes and behaviours are adopted in order to gain association with a valued third party, and
- Internalisation - in which individuals adopt specific behaviours and attitudes because their content is congruent with the individuals' value systems.

Commitment is distinguished between attachment based on exchange, that is, involvement in return for extrinsic reward, and that based on a moral attachment where involvement is based on value congruence (between the individual and the organisation) (Miller, 2004).

The ensuing evolution of commitment was more in the direction of socio-psychology (Kiesler, 1971; Salancik, 1977; Staw, 1976) and more complex multidimensional approaches (Bateman and Strasser, 1984; Bearer, 1984; Buchanan, 1974; Porter, Steer, Mowday, and Boulian, 1974, O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986). Porter, et al. (1974: 604) based their assessment on measures of motivation, identification with the values of the organisation, and employees' intentions of remaining members. They defined commitment as "the strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organisation". Buchanan (1974: 53) takes the definition one stage further and describes commitment as follows: "A partisan affective attachment to the goals and values of an organisation, to one's roles in relation to the goals and values, and to the organisation for its own sake, apart from its purely instrumental worth".

Using Kelman's (1958) research as the foundation of their study, O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) recognise that employee commitment can be approached from a number of perspectives, and identified psychological attachment, i.e. the psychological bond linking the individual and the organisation, as a central theme in all the various approaches to commitment. Other researchers in the area such as Jaros, Jermier, Koehler, and Sincich (1993) have subsequently adopted this approach to employee commitment.

Jaros, Jermier, Koehler, and Sincich (1993) defined commitment in terms of the following characteristics:

- Continuance commitment - where the employee feels compelled to commit to the organisation because the monetary, social, psychological and other costs associated with leaving are high;

- Affective commitment - commitment based on an emotional bond; and
- Moral commitment - based on internalisation of norms and identification with organisational authority; the degree to which an individual is psychologically attached to an employing organisation through the internalisation of its goals, values and mission.

The principal characteristics of Jaros, Jermier, Koehler, and Sincich (1993) commitment construct is an affective state of an employee's strength of anticipation and involvement, developed from past experiences and expectations of work-related conditions; including work experience, role characteristics, structural and personal variables which are valued by the individual.

### ***3.3. Antecedents of commitment***

As indicated in the above literature the difference between the various conceptualisations of commitment involve the psychological state reflected in commitment, the antecedent conditions leading to its development and the behaviours that are expected to result from commitment.

Antecedent conditions range from experiences of an employee in other organisational settings to demographic and economic environmental factors.

The extensive range of antecedent factors brought to light by different researchers over many years has been condensed (Storey, 1993) to yield the 12-category functional typology which is shown below:

- Supervision and rewards, i.e. Supervision interaction, leader reward behaviour, valued rewards, intrinsic and extrinsic reward value, rewarded behaviours, equity cognition
- Work task environment, i.e. Central life interest, person job congruency, work motivation, task experience, role conflict, task identity, job tension, feelings of personal status



- Co-workers relations, i.e. Group cohesion, social interaction, intrinsic reciprocity
- Performance Feedback, i.e. feedback loop, perception of performance, sense of competence
- Higher order needs satisfaction, i.e. Self-esteem, self-fulfilment, achievement need, opportunity to develop, value intrinsic rewards, reciprocity
- Employee responsibility, i.e. Irrevocability, visibility, volition, responsibility, autonomy
- Past work behaviour, i.e. Investments, frequency of action, rationalisation, consistent occupation, inertia, side-bets, past behaviour
- Organisational structure, i.e. Decentralisation, centralisation, stratification, number of employees supervised, perceived dependence, span of control
- Goal congruencies, i.e. Goal congruency, value congruency, company values
- Organisational environment, i.e. Economic environment, job environment alternatives, company reputation, company formalisation
- Demographic factors, i.e. Age, tenure, work group size, education
- General attitude factors, i.e. Met expectations, job satisfaction, factors thoughts of quitting, entry attitude

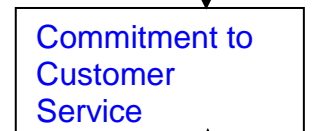
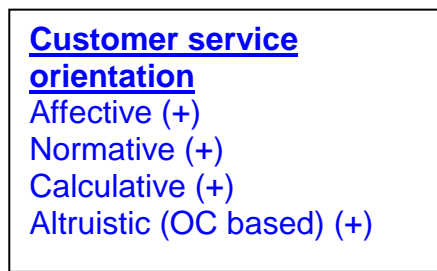
### **3.4. Commitment to Customer Service**

Peccei and Rosenthal (1997: 69) define commitment to customer service as "the relative propensity of an individual to engage in continuous improvement and to exert effort on the job for the benefit of customers". Based on this definition of commitment to customer service, Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) have set out and tested a general model of the antecedents of commitment to customer service.

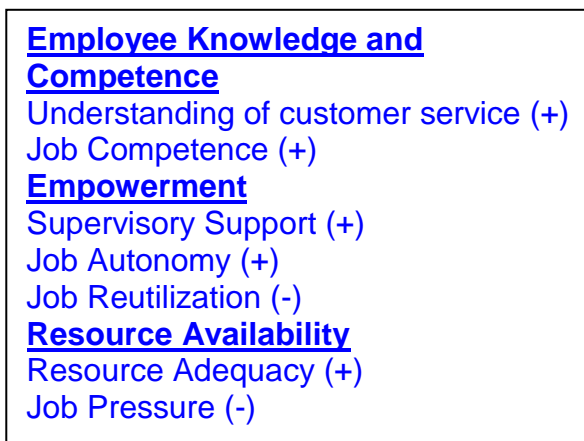
This model which was placed in the context of a broader discussion of the bases of social action, was designed to capture a number of key factors relating both to individuals' *willingness* and to their *capacity* to engage in proactive forms of customer service.

Figure 3.1 General model of commitment to customer service

**Willingness Variables**



**Capacity Variables**



Peccei, R., Rosenthal, P. (1997) . "The antecedents of employee commitment to customer service: evidence from a UK service context". International Journal of Human Resource management 8 (1) (February)

Willingness and capacity are unmeasured theoretical variables, which are alleged to be captured by the set of more specific operational variables covered in the model (Peccei and Rosenthal: 1997). The specific variables involved are discussed below.

### **3.4.1. Capacity variable**

In line with the service quality discussion, and drawing from Hackman and Oldham's (1976) job characteristics model (JCM), seven main variables relating to employee knowledge and competence, empowerment, and resource availability which are likely to affect an individuals' capacity to engage in continuous improvement and respond flexibly and effectively to customer requirements have been identified by Peccei and Rosenthal (1997). Theoretically, the underlying principle for the influence of job characteristics serve as a motivational force that inspire a person to increase his or her effort or expend energy in task performance (Gardner and Cummings 1988; Kahn and Byosiere 1992; Singh, 1998).

#### ***3.4.1.1. Employee knowledge and job competence***

Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) identified two variables as representative of Employee knowledge and job competence, i.e. understanding of customer service and job competence.

##### **a. Understanding of customer service**

In line with self-efficacy beliefs, understanding of customer service refers to the understanding of what high quality customer service entails and of how it can best be provided (Peccei and Rosenthal, 1997).

Self-efficacy is described as the "beliefs in one's capabilities to mobilise the motivation, cognitive resources and courses of action to meet given situational demands" (Bandura and Wood 1989: 408). When employees' are highly self-efficient they experience feelings of competence and confidence. Hence employees find a job to be more enjoyable, resulting in job satisfaction (McDonald & Segall, 1992) and adaptable (Hartline & Ferrell, 1996).

Thus efficacy beliefs, through their motivational properties, are strongly linked to learning and organisational performance (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998), as high levels of understanding of customer service results in high levels of job satisfaction and commitment (Singh, 1998).

Employees who exhibit a strong understanding of customer service are expected to place a stronger value on providing high quality service to customers and to have a greater understanding of the role requirements in relation to customers (Peccei & Rosenthal, 2001). As such, employees are expected to exhibit higher levels of motivation to engage in customer orientated job behaviour (Hackman & Oldman, 1980).

#### **b. Job competence**

Aligned with the expectancy theory and basic goal setting theory arguments, job competence refers to the extent to which individuals perceive that they have the necessary training, skills and competence to do their job well and cope with any unexpected problems in their work. The rationalist approach in the study of competence, couches competence in terms of the personal attributes of workers such as education level, which is often used as an objective measure of intellectual capital (Dzinkowski, 2000). A broader and more common definition of competence in organisational settings is that it includes an individual's demonstrated knowledge, skills and abilities (Ulrich, Brockbank, Yeung & Lake, 1995).

Sandberg (2000) expressed concerns that the rationalist approach defines competence in indirect terms, as these descriptions do not indicate whether the employee uses these attributes. Sandberg (2000) supports the use of an interpretative approach to discover the workers' definition and understanding of their jobs. In Sandberg's (2000) view, this interpretation determines the workers' definition of job competence and therefore the range of skills they use at work. High levels of job competence results in a greater levels of job satisfaction (Hackman & Oldham, 1976, Singh, 1998) and commitment (Singh, 1998).

That is, employees will exert extra effort to engage in continuous improvement and respond flexibly and effectively to customer requirements if they believe they have the necessary competence to do their job well and cope with any unexpected problems in their work (Lathan and Locke, 1991).

Peccei and Rosenthal (2001) have identified job competence as an important precondition to customer orientated behaviour.

Therefore a clear understanding of customer service performance requirements and a strong sense of job competence can be expected to increase individuals' confidence and ability to provide high quality service and to experiment and learn on the job in a spirit of continuous improvement.

Hence both these variables are hypothesised to have a positive impact on commitment to customer service (Peccei & Rosenthal, 1997, 2001).

#### ***3.4.1.2. Empowerment***

Bureaucracies limit people, and bureaucratic people limit themselves and their organisations. Randolph (1995) defines empowerment as recognising and releasing into the organisation the power that people already have in their wealth of useful knowledge and internal motivation.

Within occupational and organisational psychology, empowerment has come to have two main meanings. The first is as a practice, or set thereof, involving the delegation of responsibility down the hierarchy so as to give "employees increased decision-making authority in respect of the execution of their primary work tasks" (Wall, Cordery & Clegg, 2002: 147). Empowerment encompasses such practices as job enrichment, self-managing teams or autonomous work groups, many aspects of total quality management, and various involvement schemes (Hunter, 1998; Osterman, 1994).

Furthermore, empowerment has featured as a key component of the more general notion of "high involvement management" (Lawler, 1986; Pfeffer, 1994) or "progressive Human Resource Management practices", which Delaney and Huselid (1996: 949) describe as involving "participation, empowerment and job redesign".

Though empowerment is used by some to cover a wider range of practices, the usual focus is on developments at lower hierarchical levels. Wilkinson (1998: 41), for instance, observes that "Empowerment schemes tend to be direct and based on individuals or small groups (usually the work group), a clear contrast to industrial democracy and participate schemes, such as consultative committees, which are collectivist and representative in nature". Therefore, job redesign, which affords employee's greater autonomy in and control over, their work, is a prime form of empowerment.

The second meaning attached to empowerment, often referred to as 'psychological empowerment' (in contrast to 'situational empowerment' used to represent the practices described above), denotes employees' feelings of empowerment as reflected in the individuals' competence or confidence in their ability to perform tasks well; felt impact or influence in their work role; perceived self-determination or freedom to choose how they carry out their tasks; and a sense of meaning or feeling that their work is personally important (e.g. Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

From this viewpoint, empowerment is seen as an experiential construct, and "an enabling, rather than a delegating, process" (Conger & Kanungo, 1988: 474), a process that is assumed to increase worker effort (i.e. task initiation and persistence).

This variable is captured by the nature of supervision and by the way the jobs are designed and organised, i.e., supervisory support, job autonomy, and job routinisation.

### **a. Supervisory support**

Supervisory support is defined as individuals' belief that supervisors offer them work related assistance to aid in the performance of their job.

Employees receiving adequate support from their superior will most likely view that support as an organisational function (Susskind, Kacmar, & Borchgrevink, 2003). These findings are consistent with Wayne, Shore, & Linden's (1997) finding that the quality of leader-member exchange has a strong effect on perceived organisational support offered to co-workers.

Supervisor support demonstrates strong associations with Affective commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

Because employees personify the organisation, they would consider favourable or unfavourable treatment as indicative of the organisation's benevolent or malevolent orientation toward them (Rodes, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001). Employees reciprocate favourable treatment with greater commitment and performance (Rodes, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001). The employee-employer relationship appears to be dynamic, with employees monitoring and responding to changes in the organisation's apparent commitment to them. Employees develop a psychological contract concerning the mutual obligations between themselves and their employer. Frequent contract violations increases the likelihood of employee withdrawal behaviours (Rousseau, 1998), thus, resulting in poor service delivery.

Relational contract, involving open-ended long-term commitments by employees and organisations to look out for each other's welfare, were found to be maintained by organisations actions that met employee's needs and created trust in the organisation to fulfil its obligations and affective commitment (Robinson, Kraatz, & Rousseau, 1994).

Susskind et al. (2003) identified that high levels of supervisor support resulted in high levels of customer orientation. Susskind's et al. (2003) model testifies that support functions are revealed to be mediators of the relationship between standards for service and customer orientation. Thus, demonstrating that the mere existence of standards is no guarantee that standards will be achieved at the line level, it is the support and guidance based on those standards that will most likely lead to a customer orientation.

### **b. Job Autonomy**

Within the dominant job design paradigms, job autonomy is viewed as allowing individuals to act directly on the environment so as to produce desired outcomes or avoid negative ones (behavioural control) and or allowing a choice among several possible actions, outcomes, or tasks (Cognitive control) (Wall, Corbett, Martin, Clegg and Jackson, 1990).

Hunt, Chonko, and Wood (1985) define Autonomy as dealing with the extent to which employees have a say in scheduling their work and freedom to do what they want on the job during a typical workday. Job autonomy is essentially, the extent to which a job allows or requires the job holder to control his / her own work discretion, and, the freedom to make decisions independently with regard to the way work is to be carried out, and thus, form a part of his characteristic (Swanepoel, Erasmus Van Wyk Schenk, 2000, Becherer, Morgan, and Richard 1982.) i.e., the degree to which the job is vertically loaded.

In terms of Hackman and Oldham's (1980) Job characteristics model, autonomy is an important measurement contributing to job satisfaction. Autonomy elicits the psychological state of 'experienced responsibility', which in turn enhances internal / intrinsic motivation (Hackman and Oldham, 1980), thus, enhancing job satisfaction. High levels of job satisfaction elicit high levels of commitment. The functional relationship between autonomy, job satisfaction and commitment is reconfirmed and supported by Singh (1989), Ilgen and Hollenbeck (1991), Fried and Ferris (1987), Brown and Peterson (1993), and Ramaswami, Agarwal, and Bhargava (1993).



A series of additional studies (Leach, Wall, Jackson, 2003; Wall, Jackson, Davis, 1992, Jackson, Wall, 1991) has provided evidence that autonomy and empowerment results in significant performance improvements as a result of the development of new knowledge.

Consequently, Job Autonomy is an important dimension of empowerment and has been identified as an important precondition of customer orientated behaviour (Peccei & Rosenthal, 2001).

### **c. Job Routinisation**

Job routinisation refers to the degree to which work tasks are perceived to be repetitive. A boring and monotonous job suppresses motivation to perform well, whereas a challenging job enhances motivation (Kreitner, Kinicki, & Buelens, 1999). Repetitive jobs leads to job dissatisfaction, poor mental health, and low sense of accomplishment and personal growth (Melamed, Ben-avi, Luz, & Green, 1995). Key arguments in the Total Quality Management literature suggest that narrowly defined, routine jobs involving standardised repetitive tasks subject to close supervision severely limit the scope for employees to exercise their initiative and judgement when dealing with customers (Hill, 1991). Job routinisation may also elicit stress and is a critical factor with consistent dysfunctional influences (Singh, 1998).

In keeping with the empowerment argument; supportive supervision and job autonomy are hypothesised to have a positive impact on commitment to customer service (Peccei & Rosenthal, 1997, 2001), while job routinisation is expected to have a negative effect (Peccei & Rosenthal, 1997).

#### **3.4.1.3. Resource availability**

This variable can best be defined in terms of the Job demands - resources model (Demeouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001).

The model assumes that burnout develops when job demands are high and when job resources are limited, because such negative working conditions lead to energy depletion and undermine employees' motivation, respectively. That is, the model proposed that the development of burnout follow two processes.

In the first process, extreme job demands lead to constant overtaxing and in the end, to exhaustion. In the second process, a lack of resources complicates the meeting of job demands, which further leads to withdrawal behaviour. The long-term consequence of this withdrawal is disengagement from work.

Job resources may be defined as those physical, psychological, social or organisational aspects of the job that may do any of the following (Demerouti et al, 2001):

- Be functional in achieving work goals,
- Reduce job demands at the associated physiological and psychological costs,
- Stimulate personal growth and development.

Richter and Hucker (1998) distinguish resources in two categories, viz. External resources (i.e. organisational and social) and Internal resources (i.e. cognitive features and action patterns). This study focuses on external resources, i.e. resource adequacy and job pressure.

#### **a. Resource adequacy**

Resource adequacy refers to the extent to which individuals feel that their department is sufficiently well staffed to enable them to do their job well (Peccei & Rosenthal, 1997). Demeroute et al. (2001) indicates that, when job resources are lacking, employees experience disengagement.

That is, a lack of staff would result in high workload and employees would not be able to obtain their goals and would not cope with the negative influences of environmental demands. Therefore, resulting in stress. Stress produces harmful physiological outcomes as it is negatively related to job satisfaction, organisational commitment and performance (Demeroute et al. 2001).

#### **b. Job pressure**

Job pressure may be defined as those physical, social or organisational aspects of the job that require sustained physical or mental effort (Demeouti, et al. 2001). Job pressure refers to the degree to which employees perceive their job to be pressurised both in terms of the pace of work and the workloads involved (Peccei & Rosenthal, 1997).

Employees do not experience the same level of pressure or display similar outcomes for a given type of pressure. Highly pressurised positions create stress because they make people feel both overworked and uncertain about what they should be doing (Netemeyer, Barton, & Johnston, 1995). Demeroute et al (2001) indicates that when Job pressure is high employees experience exhaustion. As stated above, Stress produces harmful physiological outcomes as it is negatively related to job satisfaction, organisational commitment and performance Demeroute et al (2001).

Therefore, job pressure is expected to have a negative effect on commitment to customer service, whereas, resource adequacy is hypothesised to have a positive impact on commitment to customer service (Peccei & Rosenthal, 1997).

Consequently, employee knowledge and competence, empowerment, and resource availability may be thought of as tapping employee's capacity and opportunity to engage in customer orientated behaviour.

### **3.4.2. Willingness variable**

The individuals' willingness to engage in continuous improvement and exert effort on behalf of customers is determined by their psychological state reflected in commitment (Peccei & Rosenthal, 1997).

The behavioural approach adopted directs attention to the fact that commitment to customer service as a particular form of social action, can have different underlying bases. Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) have generalised Allen and Meyer's (1990) multidimensional model, and have extended the model to include organisational commitment, i.e. Altruistic commitment.

Allen and Meyer's (1990) three component model suggest that commitment can take several forms. The model describes three forms of organisational commitment, i.e. affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment.

#### **3.4.2.1. Affective commitment**

Affective commitment is based on an individual's emotional attachment to an organisation formed because that individual identifies with the goals of the organisation and is willing to assist the organisation in achieving these goals. Thus, affective commitment refers to a psychological attachment to the organisation; i.e. individuals stay with the organisation because they want to (Peccei & Rosenthal, 1997).

Affective commitment reflects strong and broadly based ties to various facets of the organisation. The goals and values of the organisation (e.g., loyalty, personal development of employees, teamwork, and co-operation) and those of the affectively committed employees are likely to be integrated and congruent (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982).

The processes leading to the development of affective commitment are taken from exchange principles (Mowday et al., 1982). An organisation typically provides rewards or punishments at its disposal in return for the contributions its employees make or fail to make, and the employees commit themselves to the organisation in return for the rewards received or the punishments avoided. This suggests that affective commitment is largely the result of rewards or punishments.

It has been suggested that the antecedents of affective attachment to the organisation fall into four categories, i.e. personal characteristics, job characteristics, work experiences and structural characteristics (Mowday et al., 1982). As Meyer & Allen (1987) pointed out, the strongest evidence has been provided for work experience antecedents, most clearly those experiences that fulfil employees' psychological needs to feel comfortable within the organisation and competent in the work-role. The literature on commitment (example, Meyer & Allen, 1991; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Dunham, Grube & Castaneda, 1994; Ko, Price & Mueller 1997) suggests the following antecedents which may be expected to create rewarding situations intrinsically conducive to the development of affective commitment, i.e.: job autonomy, routinisation, role ambiguity, role conflict, workload, resource inadequacy, supervisory support, co-worker support, distributive justice, legitimacy, promotional chances, job security, job hazards, and pay. In addition, the literature indicates that the organisational environment influences the employees' orientation. Therefore, met expectations, work involvement, and positive affectivity will increase affective commitment and in turn increase the individuals' commitment to customer service (Peccei & Rosenthal, 1997).

Affective commitment has a negative effect on turnover intentions and absenteeism, and a positive effect on the acceptance of change (Iverson, 1996; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Somers, 1995). Employees high in affective commitment demonstrate emotional attachment, identification with, and involvement in the organisation.

This would explain why these employees are less likely to engage in withdrawal behaviour and more willing to accept change (Meyer and Allen, 1997).

Thus, the provision of high - quality service to customers would be a source of intrinsic satisfaction, and hence, an end in itself for the individual. Individuals engage in continuous improvement and exert effort on behalf of customers because they like to do so, because they find the activities involved satisfying and enjoyable in their own right.

### ***3.4.2.2. Normative commitment***

A less common but equally viable approach has been to view commitment as a belief about one's responsibility to the organisation. Normative commitment refers to a perceived obligation to remain with the organisation, i.e. individual stay with the organisation because they feel they have to. Normative commitment is also expected to have similar consequences as affective commitment. This type of commitment focuses on moral obligation, which derives in part from the socialisation practices of organisations. Employees have an obligation to reciprocate to the organisation and therefore, are less likely to leave, be absent, and be more receptive of change (Hackett et al., 1994; Somers, 1995).

Allen & Meyer (1990) proposed that the normative component of organisational commitment will be influenced by the individual's experiences both prior to, i.e. cultural socialisation, and following, i.e. organisational socialisation, entry into the organisation.

Cultural socialisation suggests that an employee would have strong normative commitment to the organisation if significant others, such as parents, have been long-term employees of an organisation, and or, have stressed the importance of organisational loyalty.

With respect to organisational socialisation, Allen & Meyer (1990) propose that those employees who have been led to believe, via various organisational practices, that the organisation expects their loyalty would be most likely to have strong normative commitment to it.

The literature on commitment (example, Meyer & Allen, 1991; Dunham, Grube & Castaneda, 1994; Ko et al., 1997) suggests the following antecedents, which may be expected to create rewarding situations intrinsically conducive to the development of normative commitment, i.e. co-worker commitment, organisational dependability, social rewards (supervisor support and co-worker support) and organisational rewards (distributive justice, legitimacy, promotional chances, job security, the lack of job hazards, and pay).

Customer service behaviour would be normatively driven, based on the internalisation by the individual of appropriate service values and norms (Peccei & Rosenthal, 1997). Individuals try to do their best by customers out of an internalised sense duty towards them, because they feel a moral obligation to do so and think they ought to.

### **3.4.2.3. *Calculative commitment***

Allen & Meyer (1990) propose that calculative commitment suggests that individuals desire to maintain their relationships with the organisation because of the costs of leaving it and, not because of an emotional attachment.

Calculative commitment is based on Becker's (1960) theory of "side-bets": as individuals remain in the employ of the organisation for longer periods of time, they accumulate greater benefits by remaining with the organisation (or incur greater costs of departing from the organisation) that discourages them from seeking alternative employment.

Thus, calculative commitment refers to cost associated with leaving the organisation; i.e. individuals stay with the organisation because they need to (Peccei & Rosenthal, 1997).

Calculative commitment, has similar relationships as affective commitment with both turnover intentions and absenteeism (Hackett et al., 1994; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990), but exhibits a negative impact on change. As employees feel a sense of being 'locked' into the organisation due to the high costs of leaving (Jaros et al., 1993) they would be less likely to leave and be absent. The negative association with absenteeism may be explained by the self-justification hypothesis, in which high levels of sunk costs spill over to affect employees' emotional attachment (Meyer et al., 1990; Somers, 1995). However, the possibility of losing their investments (e.g. specificity of skills) would decrease their acceptance of organisational change.

The literature on commitment (example, Meyer & Allen, 1991; Becker, 1960, Dunham, Grube & Castaneda, 1994; Ko et al., 1997) suggests the following antecedents, which may be expected to create rewarding situations intrinsically conducive to the development of continuance commitment, i.e. Self investment (the amount of valuable resources such as effort, time, and energy that an employee has spent in the organisation for its well being), age, tenure, social support (from supervisors, co-workers, spouse, parents, and friends), career satisfaction, job opportunities and intent to leave.

The underlying motivation for customer service behaviour would be instrumental in the sense that the delivery of high quality service would be seen as a means to the attainment of other valued goals by the individual, such as financial rewards, recognition, promotion or job security.

Individuals will exert themselves on behalf of customers because of the perceived positive balance of costs and benefits involved, because they believe there is something to be gained from the action and that it is therefore to their advantage to engage in it (Peccei & Rosenthal, 1997).



#### **3.4.2.4. Altruistic (Organisational) commitment**

Organisational commitment is a construct, which attracts many definitions. For example, Jaros et al. (1993: 989) noted that "For over two decades, researchers have persistently and gradually refined the meaning of organisational commitment". It has evolved into a complex concept that can serve as a summary index of work-related experiences and as a predictor of work behaviours and behavioural intentions. Understood as the strength of an individual's affective, non-calculative attachment to the organisation.

As stated above, Porter et al. (1974: 604) has defined commitment as "the strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organisation". In line with commonly accepted conceptualisations of attitudinal (affective) organisational commitment, individuals who are strongly committed to the organisation can not only be expected to identify more fully with the organisation and its core values, but also to exhibit a greater willingness to exert effort on its behalf (Cook & Wall, 1980; Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1982; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

Other things being equal, therefore, organisationally committed individuals can be expected to show a greater propensity to work hard and try to provide high quality service to customers as part of their job, particularly if they perceive the organisation as placing a strong value on service quality and customer satisfaction (Paulin, Ferguson, Bergeron, 2006). Hence, individuals do not necessarily engage in continuous improvement or exert extra effort on behalf of customers because they like to do so, or because they expect to benefit from it. Rather, they do so for the sake of the organisation (Cook and Wall, 1980; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990).

In other words, individuals' expenditure of energy and effort in this case is primarily for the benefit of the organisation itself, motivated by their strong sense of attachment and identification with it.

More generally therefore, this organisational commitment driven type of customer service can be said to represent a form of other oriented, altruistic action (Peccei & Rosenthal, 1997). The primary beneficiary of this action is intended to be the organisation itself, thereby serving to distinguish this organisational commitment based, altruistic form of commitment to customer orientation from other forms identified above (Peccei & Rosenthal, 1997).

All four of these variables are hypothesised to have a positive impact on commitment to customer service.

The results of Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) study indicates that although there are additional predictors of commitment to customer service, their model captures a number of its key determinants and as such provides a useful basis for explaining variations in employee commitment to customer service.

Based on the above one can conclude that commitment to customer service refers to the adoption of customer orientation at the individual worker unit, i.e. the employees'. It represents a form of purposive action, which involves an active expenditure of energy and effort on the part of the employee and is therefore, potentially costly to the individual.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

Commitment has been recognised as a multi-faceted construct (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Reichers, 1985) and has been developed from foundations laid down by a number of authors (Becker, 1960; Mobley, 1982; Porter et al., 1974; Steers, 1977).

Although, numerous differences in the approach to commitment research exist, a central theme that continues to appear is the individual's psychological attachment (O'Reilly, Chatman, 1986).

Research indicates that commitment in the workplace is a multidimensional phenomenon, and the focus of commitment (i.e. to whom or what an employee is committed) is an important dimension in assessing worker attachment (Becker, 1992).

Although analytically distinct, affective, normative, calculative, and altruistic approaches to commitment to customer orientation are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Individuals may in fact engage in continuous improvement and exert effort on behalf of customers for a variety, or combination, of reasons.

Our interest here is in assessing the relative role which affective, normative, calculative and altruistic orientations to customer services play as determinants of commitment to customer orientation in the retail industry.

The next chapter discusses the research methodology and data collection.

## Chapter 4

### Research Methodology

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter addresses the objectives of the study, research design i.e. type of study, data collection methods, instrument design, respondent selection, respondent selection and data analysis i.e. how the data was processed.

#### **4.2 Objectives**

The aim of this study was to assess employee commitment to customer service in terms of the willingness of employees to exert themselves on behalf of customers, and their capacity to engage in customers' improvement, as well as to determine the relationship between the biographical variables and employee commitment to customer service.

##### **4.2.1 Sub-Objectives**

- a) To ascertain if there is a relationship between capacity variable and employees' commitment to customer service
- b) To determine if there is a relationship between the willingness variable and employees' commitment to customer service
- c) To find out if there is a relationship between the willingness variable and capacity variable
- d) To examine the relationship of the biographic variables on commitment to customer service, the willingness variables and the capacity variables respectively.

### **4.2.2 Hypotheses**

- a) There is a significant relationship between the capacity variables (employee knowledge and competence, empowerment, and resource availability) and commitment to customer service
- b) There is a significant relationship between the willingness variables (affective, normative, calculative, and altruistic commitment) and commitment to customer service
- c) There is a significant relationship between the willingness variables and capacity variables
- d) There is be a significant difference in commitment to customer service among the biographical variables

### **4.3 Research Design**

Research design involves various issues relating to the type of study, data collection methods, instrument design, respondent selection, and data analysis.

#### **4.3.1. Type of study**

This study can be categorised as a field study. A field study is conducted in the natural setting with minimal amount of interference (Sekaran, 2000). The natural setting in this study would be the store of a major retailer.

#### **4.3.2. Respondent selection**

A population is the total collection of elements about which the researcher makes some inferences (Cooper, Schindler, 2001). The population in this study comprises of all the employees from one particular store of the major retailing company. This Organisation was selected as it is considered to be a major fast moving consumer product retailer in South Africa.

The population totals 100. The sample, which is a subset of the population, was selected by means of the random sampling technique, as each element has a known and equal chance of selection.

Random sampling technique was considered to be adequate, as the purpose of the study is not to ascertain the perceptions of the various groups in the store. Most researchers consider a sample of 30% to 40% of the population to be adequate (Sekaran, 2000).

#### 4.3.3. Characteristics of the Sample

Table 4.1 Frequency and percentage table of the Biographical Variables

Variable	Frequency	Percent
<b>Age</b>		
18-28	14	26.4
29-38	15	28.3
39-48	17	32.1
49-58	5	9.4
Over 59	2	3.8
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	27	50.9
Female	26	49.1
<b>Race</b>		
Black	8	15.1
White	5	9.4
Coloured	3	5.7
Asian	37	69.8
<b>Work Status</b>		
Full-time	34	64.2
Part-time	19	35.8

Table 4.1 (Continued)

<b>Tenure</b>		
0-2 years	11	20.8
3-4 years	8	15.1
5-6 years	4	7.5
7-8 years	4	7.5
9 years and over	26	49.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>100.0</b>

There was a total of 53 respondents of which;  
86.8% were within the age of 18-48 years,  
50.9% were male and 49.1% female,  
69.8% were Asian,  
52.8% were stock controllers,  
64.2% were full-time employees,  
49.1% were employed with the organisation for 9 years and over,  
62.3% were employed on the sales floor.

#### **4.3.4. Data collection**

The questionnaire was applied to gather data, as one seldom learns much about opinions and attitudes except by questioning. Communication is accomplished via personal interviews, telephone interviews, or self-administered surveys (Cooper, & Schindler, 2001). As a result of time, cost and human resource constraints the self administered survey method was considered to be the most appropriate.

Data was collected by means of a self-administered questionnaire. A questionnaire is a pre-formulated written set of questions to which the respondent records the answers usually with closely delineated alternatives (Sekaran, 2000).

#### **4.3.5. Instrument design**

The questionnaire contained three sections. The first section, i.e. administrative, was an introduction to the respondents informing them the purpose of the research and requesting their co-operation in completing the survey. The administrative section advised subjects that participation was voluntary and confidentiality was assured. The second section, i.e. demographic, describes the respondents by a number of characteristics, which included age, gender, tenure, position, and work status. The final section, i.e. the information, was developed by Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) in their exploratory research to operationalize and conceptualise the notion of commitment to customer service as part of a broader concern to explore the determinants of key aspects of service quality and of individual level performance in service organisations. This section consisted of 81 questions. The questionnaire was pre-tested on respondent surrogates. The pre-test revealed there to be no major weaknesses. A five point likert type scale was used to measure the attitudinal variables.

Respondents were requested to rate their level of agreement / disagreement with each statement on a scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The main measures used are outlined below.

##### **4.3.5.1. Dependant variables**

In line with the definition proposed by Peccei and Rosenthal (1997), commitment to customer service which measures respondents self reported propensity to exert effort on behalf of customers and to engage in continuous improvement was assessed by six items in the questionnaire designed by Peccei and Rosenthal (1997).



### **4.3.5.2. Independent Variables**

Three independent variables have been identified i.e. willingness, capacity, and demographic variables. These variables were identified by Peccei & Rosenthal in their research.

#### **4.3.5.2.1. Willingness Variable**

The four willingness variables identified are affective orientation, normative orientation, calculative orientation and altruistic orientation.

a. Affective orientation:

Is measured by means of Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) two-item scale tapping the extent to which respondents enjoyed dealing with customers and found personal satisfaction from giving good service to customers.

b. Normative Orientation:

Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) used a two item scale tapping the extent to which respondents felt that customers have a right to expect superior treatment from all staff, and that in doing their job, staff should always have the best interest of the customers in mind.

c. Calculative orientation

This variable is measured by combining cost, benefit and upward hierarchical trust i.e.  $(\text{Benefits}/\text{Cost}) \times \text{Upward hierarchical trust}$ .

Benefits - refers to perceived extrinsic benefits (rewards) of proactive customer service behaviour. This element was operationalised in terms of a two-item scale measuring the perceived level of attention and recognition given to staff in the organisation for providing high quality service to customers.

This was based on the assumption that recognition by superiors of one's high performance will be seen by employees to carry positive implications. These positive implications can be of various type, including self-esteem and the possibility of indirect rewards, e.g. Job security, promotion or generally more favourable treatment by one's supervisor or manager.

Cost - refers to perceived costs of proactive customer service behaviour. This element was operationalised by inverting the affective orientation scale described above and using this inverted scale as a measure of the perceived cost of engaging in proactive customer service behaviour. The underlying logic is that the perceived costs of customer service activities are presumed to be inversely related to the amount of intrinsic enjoyment and satisfaction that individuals derive from the activities.

Upward hierarchical trust - the degree of which is measured using a six item scale which Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) adapted from Cook and Wall's (1980) 'faith in management' component. The scale taps respondents' degree of trust in management and immediate supervisors respectively.

#### d. Altruistic orientation

Altruistic orientation is measured by combining two variables, i.e. organisational commitment and perceived customer service climate within the organisation. That is, organisational commitment X customer service climate.

Customer service climate refers to the extent to which employees perceived that a strong emphasis was placed on service quality and customer satisfaction within their store. This element was measured by means of Peccei and Rosenthal's (1997) nine item scale, tapping the extent to which respondents perceive other people or groups in the store, e.g. management, supervisors, and co-workers to be committed to customer service and as consistently behaving in line with espoused customer service values.

Organisational commitment was measured using the six-item organisational commitment scale relating to identification with the organisation and the willingness to exert effort on its behalf.

#### **4.3.5.2.2. Capacity variables**

The capacity variables refer to employee knowledge and competence, empowerment, and resource availability. The dimensions of this variable, i.e. understanding of customer service and resource adequacy, were measured using measures identified by Peccei and Rosenthal (1997). Supervisory support, job autonomy, job routinisation and job pressure were all measured by means of a three item scale which Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) adapted from Price, Mueller, and Currivan (1992).

#### **4.6. Data analysis**

A summary of descriptive and inferential statistics and exploratory data analysis was used to analyse the data.

##### **4.6.1 Descriptive statistics**

The objective of descriptive statistics analysis is to develop sufficient knowledge to describe a body of data. This is accomplished by understanding the data levels for the measurements which were choose, their distributions, and characteristics of location, spread, and shape. The discovery of miscoded values, missing data, and other problems in the dataset is enhanced with descriptive statistics (Cooper, & Schindler, 2001).

In the case of descriptive statistics, the means and standard deviation will be calculated to ascertain the extent of employees commitment to customer service, the willingness of employees to exert themselves in terms of customer orientation (affective, normative, calculative, and altruistic),

and the capacity to engage in customer improvement in terms of employee knowledge, empowerment, and resource availability. The standard deviation will indicate the extent of variation in the subjects' responses.

#### **4.6.1.1 Frequency Distribution**

A frequency distribution is a table, which summarises ratio-scaled data into intervals (classes) each with corresponding frequencies. The class frequencies reflect the number of occurrences of data values that fall within the class limits (Cooper, & Schindler, 2001).

#### **4.6.1.2 Mean**

The mean is the arithmetic average. It is the sum of the observed values in the distribution divided by the number of observations. The mean is the location measure most frequently used for interval ratio data but can be misleading when the distribution contains extreme scores, i.e. large or small (Cooper, & Schindler, 2001).

#### **4.6.1.3 Standard Deviation**

The standard deviation summarizes how far away from the average the data values in general are. It is possibly the most frequently used measure of spread because it improves interpretability by removing the variance's square and expressing deviations in their original units e.g. net profits in Rands, not Rands squared. It is also an important concept for descriptive statistics because it reveals the amount of variability of individuals within the data set. Similar to the mean, standard deviations is affected by extreme scores (Cooper, & Schindler, 2001).

## **4.6.2 Inferential statistics**

Inferential statistics analysis allows the researcher to make inferences about a population based on evidence gathered from a sample. Although the research cannot state unequivocally what is true about the entire population,

Representative samples allow us to make statements about what is probably true and how much error is likely to be encountered in arriving at a decision (Cooper, & Schindler, 2001). The following inferential statistics was used includes, correlation analysis, t Test, analysis of variance and multiple regression analysis.

### **4.6.2.1 Correlation analysis**

Correlation analysis is done to trace the mutual influence of variables on one another. In terms of sub objectives 4 and 5, the relationship between willingness variables, capacity variables, and commitment to customer service needs to be established. Accordingly, correlation analysis was used here.

### **4.6.2.2 t Test**

This test will be used to determine whether there is a significant mean difference in commitment to customer service as well as the willingness and capacity variables among biographical variables (which have two group or categories).

### **4.5.2.3 Analysis of variance (Anova)**

Anova tests for significant mean differences in variables among multiple groups (more than two groups or categories).

#### **4.7. Conclusion**

In order to assess employee commitment to customer service in terms of the willingness of employees to exert themselves on behalf of customers, and their capacity to engage in customers improvement, as well as to determine the relationship between the biographical variables and employee commitment to customer service, a field study was conducted at a store of a major retail organisation.

The survey covered 100 staff employed at the particular store. The research instrument, a self-completion questionnaire was distributed to all staff. A total of 53 completed questionnaires were returned making for a response rate of 53 percent. Data will be analysed by means of Correlation analysis, t Test, Analysis of variance (Anova) and frequency distribution.

The presentation of the above analysis will be displayed in the next chapter

## Chapter 5

### Presentation of Data

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The following is the presentation of results after the data has been analysed by applying the statistical techniques.

#### **5.2 Objectives**

The aim of this study was to assess employee commitment to customer service in terms of the willingness of employees to exert themselves on behalf of customers, and their capacity to engage in customers improvement, as well as to determine the relationship between the biographical variables and employee commitment to customer service.

##### **5.2.1 Sub-Objectives**

- a) To ascertain if there is a relationship between capacity variable and employees' commitment to customer service
- b) To determine if there is a relationship between the willingness variable and employees' commitment to customer service
- c) To find out if there is a relationship between the willingness variable and capacity variable
- d) To examine the relationship between the biographic variables on commitment to customer service, the willingness variables and the capacity variables respectively.

### 5.3 Feel for the Data

The results of the Means and Standard Deviations in terms of commitment to customer service, willingness and capacity are presented below.

#### 5.3.1 Commitment to customer service

The Means, Standard Deviations, minimum and maximum scores for commitment to customer service shown in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1: Means and Standard Deviation, Minimum and Maximum Scores on Commitment to Customer Service

	Z	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Commitment to customer service	53	3.33	5.00	4.37	0.46

Commitment to customer service has a mean score of 4.37 indicating that respondents have a strong commitment to customer service. The Standard Deviation (SD=0.46), shows little variation in subjects levels of commitment to customer service. This is confirmed by examining minimum and maximum scores. On a 5 point scale a value of 3.33 will indicate a low level of commitment to customer service.

#### 5.3.2 Willingness variables

The Means, Standard Deviations, minimum and maximum scores for the willingness variables are shown in Table 5.2 on the next page.



Table 5.2: Means and Standard Deviation, Minimum and Maximum Scores for the Willingness Variables

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Affective customer service orientation	53	3.50	5.00	4.54	0.53
Normative customer service orientation	53	3.50	5.00	4.57	0.50
Calculative customer service orientation	53	1.00	5.00	2.14	1.25
Altruistic customer service orientation	53	2.24	5.00	3.92	0.89

The means scores indicate that respondents have a strong sense of both Affective (4.54) and Normative (4.57) customer service orientation. There was also some preference in terms of Altruistic (3.92) customer service orientation, whereas Calculative (2.14) mean scores indicate there is a low level of influence. However in terms of the Standard Deviation the highest variation was recorded for Calculative customer service orientation (SD=1.25) followed by Altruistic customer service orientation (SD=0.88)

### 5.3.3 Capacity variables

The Means, Standard Deviations, minimum and maximum scores for the capacity variables are shown in Table 5.3 on the next page.

Table 5.3: Means and Standard Deviations, Minimum and Maximum Scores for the Capacity Variables

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Employee knowledge and competence</b>					
Understanding customer service	53	1.00	5.00	4.45	0.72
Job competence	53	1.00	5.00	4.23	0.71
<b>Empowerment</b>					
Supervisory support	53	1.00	5.00	3.58	0.99
Job autonomy	53	1.00	5.00	3.82	0.93
Job Routinization	53	1.33	4.00	2.57	0.50
<b>Resource availability</b>					
Resource adequacy	53	1.00	5.00	2.89	1.10
Job pressure	53	1.00	4.67	3.24	0.89

The Mean scores listed in Table 5.3 show that the employees agree that understanding of customer service (4.45) and job competence (4.23) are important dimensions of Knowledge and Competence that is required to engage in commitment to customer service. The agreement relating to Supervisory support (3.59) and job autonomy (3.82) show that these dimensions Empower employees to engage in commitment to customer service. The slight agreement for Job Routinization (2.57) show that subjects are undecided or impartial as to the empowerment of job routinization to engage in commitment to customer service.

The slight agreement for Resource adequacy (2.89) and job pressure (3.24) show that subjects are also undecided or impartial that the dimensions of resource availability engages employees to be committed to customer service.

## 5.4 Hypothesis

### 5.4.1 Hypothesis 1

There is a relationship between the capacity variables (employee knowledge and competence, empowerment, and resource availability) and commitment to customer service

The results obtained in terms of Hypothesis 1 are shown in the Table 5.4 below.

Table 5.4 Pearson correlation coefficient - Capacity Variables and Commitment to Customer Service

Capacity Variables	Commitment to Customer Service
Employee knowledge and competence	
Understanding customer service	.278*
Job competence	.264
Empowerment	
Supervisory support	.272*
Job autonomy	.117
Job Routinization	-.258
Resource availability	
Resource adequacy	.21
Job pressure	.070

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results in Table 5.4 show, that understanding customer service and supervisory support has a positive and significant relationship with commitment to customer service at the 5% level of significance. Job competence, job autonomy, resource adequacy and job pressure were not significant. Job routinisation show a negative relationship, but was not significant.

Hypothesis 1 is supported in the case of Understanding Customer Service and Supervisory Support.

#### 5.4.2 Hypothesis 2

There is a relationship between the willingness variables (affective, normative, calculative, and altruistic commitment) and commitment to customer service

The results obtained in terms of Hypothesis 2 is shown in the Table 5.5 below.

Table 5.5 Pearson correlation coefficient - Willingness Variable and Commitment to Customer Service

<b>Willingness variables</b>	<b>Commitment to Customer Service</b>
Affective customer service orientation	.428**
Normative customer service orientation	.579**
Calculative customer service orientation	.518**
Altruistic customer service orientation	.533**

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation coefficients listed in Table 5.5 indicate that Affective Orientation (r: 0.428), Normative orientation (r: 0.579), Calculative Orientation (r: 0.518) and Altruistic Orientation (r: 0.533) were all positively related to Commitment to Customer Service at the 1% level of significance.

Accordingly, Hypothesis 2 is supported.

### 5.4.3 Hypothesis 3

There is a relationship between the biographical variables and commitment to customer service.

The results obtained in terms of Hypothesis 3 is shown in the Table 5.6 below.

#### a. Commitment to customer service and the biographical variables (Work status and Gender)

The results obtained in terms of commitment to customer service and work status and gender are presented in Table 5.6 below:

Table 5.6 t Test - commitment to customer service and biographical variables (Work status and Gender)

Biographical variable	t	p
Work Status (full time and part time)	2.085	0.042*
Gender	3.679	0.001**

\*p<0.05

\*\*p<0.01

The results show that there is a significant difference in commitment to customer service among the biographical variables - work status (full time and part time) at the 5% level of significance, and gender at the 1% level of significance.

**b. Commitment to customer service and the biographical variables (race, tenure, and age)**

The results obtained in terms of commitment to customer service and race, tenure and age are presented in Table 5.7 below:

Table 5.7 t Test - commitment to customer service and biographical variables (race, tenure and age)

Biographical variable	f	p
Race	5.231	0.003**
Tenure	2.238	0.079
Age	0.785	0.541

\*\*p<0.01

The results show that there is a significant difference in commitment to customer service among the Race groups. However there was no significant difference in Commitment to Customer Service among the Tenure and Age groups.

Accordingly, Hypothesis 3 is supported in the case of work status, gender and race.

**5.4.4 Hypothesis 4**

There is a significant difference in the willingness variables (affective, normative, calculative, and altruistic commitment) among the biographical variables.

The results obtained in terms of Hypothesis 4 is shown in the Tables 5.8 to 5.12 below:

**a. Willingness variables and the biographical variable Work status (Full time and Part time)**

The results obtained in terms of the Willingness variables and work status are presented in Table 5.8 below.

Table 5.8 t Test - Willingness Variable and biographical variables - Work status (Full time and Part time)

Willingness variables	t	p
Affective customer service orientation	-0.422	0.674
Normative customer service orientation	1.005	0.320
Calculative customer service orientation	1.542	0.129
Altruistic customer service orientation	1.295	0.201

The results show that there is no significant difference in the willingness variables among the Work status groups (Full time and Part time).

**b. Willingness variables and the biographical variables, Gender**

The results obtained in terms of the Willingness variables and Gender are presented in Table 5.9 below:

Table 5.9 t Test - Willingness Variable and biographical variable Gender

Willingness variables	t	p
Affective customer service orientation	2.749	0.001**
Normative customer service orientation	2.101	0.041*
Calculative customer service orientation	3.493	0.001**
Altruistic customer service orientation	2.771	0.008**

\* p<0.05

\*\*p<0.01

The results show that there is a significant difference in the willingness variable, normative customer service orientation, between males and females at the 5% level of significance. The results show that there is a significant difference in the willingness variable, affective customer service orientation, calculative customer service orientation and altruistic customer service orientation between males and females at the 1% level of significance.

**c. Willingness variables and the biographical variable, Race**

The results obtained in terms of the Willingness variables and Race are presented in Table 5.10 below:

Table 5.10 t Test - Willingness Variable and biographical variable, Race

Willingness variables	f	p
Affective customer service orientation	1.009	0.397
Normative customer service orientation	2.152	0.106
Calculative customer service orientation	0.726	0.542
Altruistic customer service orientation	0.717	0.547

The results show that there is no significant difference in the willingness variables among the Race groups

**d. Willingness variables and the biographical variable, Tenure**

The results obtained in terms of the Willingness variables and Tenure are presented in Table 5.11 on the next page:



Table 5.11 t Test - Willingness Variable and the biographical variable, Tenure

Willingness variables	f	p
Affective customer service orientation	0.138	0.968
Normative customer service orientation	0.850	0.501
Calculative customer service orientation	1.425	0.240
Altruistic customer service orientation	1.658	0.175

The results show that there is no significant difference in the willingness variables among the Tenure groups.

**e. Willingness variables and the biographical variable, Age**

The results obtained in terms of the Willingness variables and Age are presented in Table 5.12 below:

Table 5.12 t Test - Willingness Variable and biographical variable, Age

Willingness variables	f	p
Affective customer service orientation	0.219	0.926
Normative customer service orientation	0.652	0.628
Calculative customer service orientation	0.417	0.795
Altruistic customer service orientation	0.347	0.845

The results show that there is no significant difference in the willingness variables among the Age groups.

Accordingly, there is a significant difference in the willingness variables among the biographical variable Gender.

### 5.4.5 Hypothesis 5

There is a significant difference in the capacity variables (employee knowledge and competence, empowerment, and resource availability) among the biographical variables.

The results obtained in terms of Hypothesis 5 is shown in the Tables 5.13 to 5.17 on the following pages:

#### a. Capacity variables and the biographical variable, Work status (Full time and Part time)

The results obtained in terms of the Capacity variables and work status are presented in Table 5.13 below:

Table 5.13 t Test - Capacity Variables and biographical variable, Work status (Full time and Part time)

Capacity variables	t	p
<b>Employee knowledge and competence</b>		
Understanding of customer service	-1.358	0.181
Job competence	-1.047	0.300
<b>Empowerment</b>		
Supervisory support	2.112	0.040*
Job autonomy	1.299	0.200
Job routinization	-0.648	0.520
<b>Resource availability</b>		
Job pressure	-0.793	0.432
Resource adequacy	-0.039	0.969

\*p<0.05

The results show that there is a significant difference in the capacity variable - supervisory support among the work status groups (full time and part time) at the 5% level of significance.

### b. Capacity variables and the biographical variable, Gender

The results obtained in terms of the Capacity variable and Gender are presented in Table 5.14 below.

Table 5.14 t Test - Capacity Variables and biographical variable, Gender

Capacity variables	t	p
<b>Employee knowledge and competence</b>		
Understanding of customer service	0.671	0.505
Job competence	0.277	0.783
<b>Empowerment</b>		
Supervisory support	2.041	0.046*
Job autonomy	0.859	0.394
Job routinization	-0.617	0.540
<b>Resource availability</b>		
Job pressure	0.066	.948
Resource adequacy	0.508	0.613

\*p<0.05

The results show that there is a significant difference in the capacity variable - supervisory support between males and females at the 5% level of significance.

### c. Capacity variables and the biographical variable, Race

The results obtained in terms of the Capacity variables and Race are presented in Table 5.15 on the next page:

Table 5.15 t Test - Capacity Variables and the biographical variable, Race

Capacity variables	f	p
<b>Employee knowledge and competence</b>		
Job competence	0.565	0.641
Understanding of customer service	0.354	0.786
<b>Empowerment</b>		
Supervisory support	0.238	0.869
Job autonomy	2.195	0.100
Job routinization	1.349	0.269
<b>Resource availability</b>	f	p
Job pressure	0.095	0.963
Resource adequacy	0.447	0.720

The results show that there is no significant difference in the capacity variables - Supervisory support, Job autonomy, job routinization, job pressure, job competence and response adequacy among the Race Groups.

#### d. Capacity variables and the biographical variables - Tenure

The results obtained in terms of the Capacity variables and Tenure are presented in Table 5.16 below.

Table 5.16 t Test - Capacity Variables and the biographical variable, Tenure

Capacity variables	f	p
<b>Employee knowledge and competence</b>		
Understanding of customer service	0.603	0.662
Job competence	0.644	0.634
<b>Empowerment</b>		
Supervisory support	1.444	0.234
Job autonomy	1.134	0.353
Job routinization	0.693	0.600
<b>Resource availability</b>		
Job pressure	0.878	0.484
Resource adequacy	0.850	0.501

The results show that there is no significant difference in the capacity variables - Supervisory support, Job autonomy, job routinization, job pressure, job competence and response adequacy among the Tenure groups.

**e. Capacity variables and the biographical variables - Age**

The results obtained in terms of the Capacity variables and Age are presented in Table 5.17 below:

Table 5.17 t Test - Capacity Variables and the biographical variable, Age

Capacity variables	f	p
<b>Employee knowledge and competence</b>		
Understanding of customer service	2.228	0.080
Job competence	2.135	0.091
<b>Empowerment</b>		
Supervisory support	0.726	0.579
Job autonomy	3.152	0.022*
Job routinization	0.187	0.944
<b>Resource availability</b>		
Job pressure	0.329	0.857
Resource adequacy	0.912	0.465

\*p<0.05

The results show that there is a significant difference in the capacity variable - job autonomy among the age groups at the 5% level of significance.

Accordingly, Hypothesis 5 is supported in terms of the capacity variable Supervisory support and the biographical variables Work status and Gender and Job Autonomy and Age.

### 5.4.6 Hypothesis 6

There is a significant relationship between the capacity variables (employee knowledge and competence, empowerment, and resource availability) and willingness variables (affective, normative, calculative, and altruistic commitment)

The results obtained in terms of Hypothesis 6 is shown in the Tables 5.18 to 5.21 on the following pages:

The results obtained in terms of the Capacity variables and the Willingness variable Affective customer service orientation is presented in Table 5.18 below:

Table 5.18 Correlations analysis - Capacity Variables and Willingness variable, Affective customer service orientation

Capacity variables	r	p
<b>Employee knowledge and competence</b>		
Job competence	0.17	0.24
Understanding of customer service	0.26	0.64
<b>Empowerment</b>		
Supervisory support	0.16	0.26
Job autonomy	0.19	0.17
Job routinization	-0.24	0.78
<b>Resource availability</b>		
Job pressure	0.15	0.30
Resource adequacy	0.14	0.32

The results show that there is no significant relationship between any of the capacity variables and affective customer service orientation.

The results obtained in terms of the Capacity variables and the Willingness variable Normative customer service orientation is presented in Table 5.19 below:

Table 5.19 Correlations analysis - Capacity Variables and Willingness variable, Normative customer service orientation

Capacity variables	r	p
<b>Employee knowledge and competence</b>		
Job competence	0.20	0.15
Understanding of customer service	0.32*	0.22
<b>Empowerment</b>		
Supervisory support	0.13	0.35
Job autonomy	-0.29	0.84
Job routinization	-0.26*	0.04
<b>Resource availability</b>		
Job pressure	-0.20	0.16
Resource adequacy	-0.73	0.60

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The results show that there is no significance between the capacity variable, understanding of customer service and normative customer service orientation.

The results indicated that there is a significantly negative relationship between the capacity variable, job routinization and normative customer service orientation.

The results obtained in terms of the Capacity variables and the Willingness variable Calculative customer service orientation is presented in Table 5.20 on the next page:

Table 5.20 Correlations analysis - Capacity Variables and Willingness variable, Calculative customer service orientation

Capacity variables	r	p
<b>Employee knowledge and competence</b>		
Job competence	0.11	0.42
Understanding of customer service	0.16	0.24
<b>Empowerment</b>		
Supervisory support	0.44**	0.001
Job autonomy	0.21	0.13
Job routinization	-0.26	0.06
<b>Resource availability</b>		
Job pressure	0.01	0.96
Resource adequacy	-0.14	0.34

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The results show that there is a positive significant relationship between the capacity variable, supervisory support and calculative customer service orientation.

The results obtained in terms of the Capacity variables and the Willingness variable Altruistic customer service orientation is presented in Table 5.21 on the next page:



Table 5.21 Correlations analysis - Capacity Variables and Willingness variable, Altruistic customer service orientation

Capacity variables	r	p
<b>Employee knowledge and competence</b>		
Job competence	0.41**	0.002
Understanding of customer service	0.39**	0.004
<b>Empowerment</b>		
Supervisory support	0.66**	0.00
Job autonomy	0.29*	0.33
Job routinization	-0.32*	0.02
<b>Resource availability</b>		
Job pressure	0.11	0.42
Resource adequacy	-0.9	0.54

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The results show that there is a positive significant relationship between the capacity variables, job competence, understanding of customer service, and supervisory support, and altruistic customer service orientation.

The results indicate that there is a significant negative relationship between job routinization and altruistic customer service orientation.

The data showed that there was no significance between the capacity variable job autonomy and altruistic customer service orientation.

### **5.5 Conclusion**

In summary employees' demonstrated a strong commitment to customer service which is motivated by a strong Affective and normative orientation, with some preference to altruistic orientation.

Subjects agree that understanding of customer service and job competence are important dimensions of Knowledge and Competence that is required to engage in commitment to customer service.

The agreement relating to Supervisory support and job autonomy show that these dimensions Empower employees to engage in commitment to customer service. The slight agreement for Job Routinization show that subjects are undecided as to the empowerment of job routinization to engage in commitment to customer service.

The slight agreement for Resource adequacy and job pressure show that subjects are also undecided that the dimensions of resource availability engages employees to be committed

A more detailed discussion of the above will be presented in the following chapter.

## Chapter 6

### Discussion

#### **6.1 Introduction**

The following is a discussion explaining the data that was analysed in the preceding chapter.

#### **6.2 Commitment to customer service**

The results show that staff expressed a strong commitment to customer service ( $\bar{X}=4.371$ ). In comparing the results of this research with that of Peccei & Rosenthal (1997) indicated that this sample of South African employees within a Fast moving consumer group expressed a stronger commitment to customer service than that of Peccei and Rosenthal's (1997) sample of United Kingdom employees ( $\bar{X} = 3.89$ ) within a food retailing organisation.

Thus, based on Peccei and Rosenthal's (1997) definition of commitment to customer service, this research concludes that the employees' possess the relative propensity to engage in continues improvement and to exert effort on the job for the benefit of customers. This refers to the psychological bond linking the employees and the organisation (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986).

Research by Guest and Hogue (1994) suggests that the use of a range of HRM practices would create conditions necessary to tap expertise, motivation, and commitment of all the organisations employees. This is, based on the assumption that when employees are loyal they will work harder and develop mutual commitment. Therefore, by focusing on customer service practices, the organisation has hoped to develop employees' commitment to customer service.

Accordingly, strong commitment to customer service has been driven and stimulated by the organisation's reputation and position on customer service, in addition to the use of human resource packages. The organisation's vision is to be the leading retail service provider, and the mission is to provide superior service to all customers and business partners. Company reputation and values have been identified as antecedent condition to commitment (Storey, 1993).

The organisation hopes to achieve this by being the employer of choice within the South African Fast moving consumer group retail industry. The employer of choice campaign is driven by a strong employee relation's programme, which includes performance management and agreements, talent management and development, and employee wellness campaign. Thus, the organisation aims to create a customer-orientated culture within the organisation.

### **6.3 Willingness variables**

In terms of the willingness of employees to exert themselves on behalf of customers, the staff expressed strong Normative ( $\bar{X}$ = 4.57), Affective ( $\bar{X}$  = 4.54), and Altruistic ( $\bar{X}$ = 3.92) customer service orientation, and a weak Calculative ( $\bar{X}$ = 2.14) customer service orientation. The findings in this research were comparable to that of Peccei & Rosenthal (1997).

Peccei & Rosenthal's (1997) research indicated that normative ( $\bar{X}$  = 4.16) and affective ( $\bar{X}$ = 4.09) orientations to customer service within their sample tended to be significantly more pronounced than either altruistic ( $\bar{X}$ = 3.31) or calculative ( $\bar{X}$ = 2.04) orientation. A probable explanation for the weak results obtained for calculative customer service orientation was possibly due to the lack of visibility of non-financial rewards and the lack of direct financial rewards for customer service performance. Employees did not feel that they received strong recognition for providing high quality service to customers.

This primary non-calculative phenomenon is supportive of research conducted by Smith et al. (1983) and O'Reilly and Chatman (1986). Smith et al. (1983) research argues that much of the key behaviour in organisations relay on acts of co-operation, altruism and spontaneous un-rewarded help from employees. O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) found commitment to be a psychological bond linking the individual and the organisation. Thus, behaviour expected as part of the job and prosocial acts beyond what is outlined in the job description, actions for which the individual receives no immediate reward but which benefit the wider organisation (Organisational Citizenship Behaviour).

Customer service behaviour would be normatively driven if it is based on the internalisation by the individual of appropriate service values and norms (Peccei & Rosenthal, 1997). Individuals try to do their best by customers out of an internalised sense of duty towards them, because they feel a moral obligation to do so and think they ought to (Wiener, 1982).

The literature on commitment (example, Meyer & Allen, 1991; Dunham, Grube & Castaneda, 1994; Ko et al., 1997) suggest the following antecedents which may be expected to create rewarding situations intrinsically conducive to the development of normative commitment, i.e. co-worker commitment, organisation dependability, social rewards (supervisor support and co-worker support) and organisation rewards (distributive justice, legitimacy, promotional chances, job security, the lack of job hazards, and pay).

Employees' strong normative commitment is stimulated by the organisations strong performance and talent management and development programme. These programmes instil a strong sense of organisation dependability and supervisor support, distributive justice and promotional chances Allen & Meyer, 1991; Ko & Mueller, 1997).

Employees that are driven by a strong sense of affective customer service orientation would exert effort on behalf of customers because they like to do so, because they find the activities involved satisfying and enjoyable in their own right (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

The literature on commitment (example, Meyer & Allen, 1991; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Dunham, Grube & Castaneda, 1994; Ko & Mueller 1997) suggest the following antecedents which may be expected to create rewarding situations intrinsically conducive to the development of affective commitment, i.e. job autonomy, routinisation, role ambiguity, role conflict, workload resource inadequacy, supervisory support, co-worker support, job hazards and pay. In addition, the literature indicates that the organisational environment influences the employees' orientation. Therefore, met expectations, work involvement and positive affectivity will increase affective commitment and in turn increase the individuals' commitment to customer service.

Hence, it can be stated that employees' affective commitment is stimulated by the organisation's employee wellness campaign, the strong leadership drive that encourages job autonomy, the performance management programme and clearly defining job profile and goals.

Employees that are altruistically motivated are driven primarily for the benefit of the organisation itself, motivated by their strong sense of attachment and identification with it.

The employees' altruistic commitment has been stimulated primarily by the organisations drive of the corporate value programme and the long association with the organisation, i.e. 49.1% of the respondents have been employed for a period of 9 years or over.

In summary, this research concludes that employees' commitment to customer service is driven and motivated by expressive, moral and emotional concerns.

The results in Table 5.2 (p58) indicate a very low level of calculative customer service orientation can be explained in terms of the absence of direct financial incentives and rewards for customer service performance within the organisation. Employees do not feel that they receive strong recognition for providing high quality service to customers.

Employees that are calculatively motivated can be expected to try to do their best for customers when the perceived benefits of doing so outweigh the costs and when they are reasonably confident that their efforts on behalf of customers will be appropriately rewarded by management (Peccei & Rosenthal, 1997).

Literature (example, Meyer & Allen, 1991; Becker, 1960, Dunham, Grube & Castaneda, 1994; Ko & Mueller, 1997) suggest the following antecedents which may be expected to create rewarding situations intrinsically conducive to the development of calculative commitment, i.e. self investment (the amount of valuable resources such as effort, time and energy that an employee has spent in the organisation for its well being), age, tenure, social support (from supervisors, co-workers, spouse, parents, and friends), career satisfaction, job opportunities and intent to leave.

The absence of a direct link between remuneration and customer service performance does not render irrelevant a calculative orientation within an organisational context.

Non-financial rewards in the form of approval and recognition can serve as strong incentives for engaging in customer behaviour (Dunham, Grube & Castaneda, 1994). Employees may value social recognition for their performance for reasons of self-esteem (Storey, 1993). A range of potentially valued rewards, such as job security, promotion and better day to day treatment would reasonably be seen as contingent on recognition of effective performance by one's superiors (Storey, 1993). The problem may lie in the strength and visibility of the non-financial rewards linked with the provision of customer service within the organisation.

## **6.4 Capacity variables**

The results relating to the capacity to engage in customer improvement concur with that of Peccei & Rosenthal's (1997) research.

The Mean scores listed in Table 5.3 (p59) show that subject agree that understanding of customer service ( $\bar{X}$ = 4.45) and job competence ( $\bar{X}$ = 4.23) are important dimensions of Knowledge and Competence that is required to engage in commitment to customer service. The agreement relating to Supervisory support ( $\bar{X}$ = 3.59) and job autonomy ( $\bar{X}$ = 3.82) show that these dimensions empower employees to engage in commitment to customer service. The low score for Job Routinization ( $\bar{X}$ = 2.57) show that subjects are undecided or impartial as to the empowerment of job routinization to engage in commitment to customer service.

The low scores for Resource adequacy ( $\bar{X}$ = 2.89) and job pressure ( $\bar{X}$ = 3.24) show that subjects are also undecided or impartial that the dimensions of resource availability engages employees to be committed to customer service.

The results were similar to Peccei and Rosenthal's (1997) research. The findings of Peccei and Rosenthal's (1997) research indicated that subjects agreed that understanding of customer service ( $\bar{X}$ = 4.20) and job competence ( $\bar{X}$ = 4.18) were important variables of Knowledge and Competence that is required to engage in commitment to customer service.

With reference to the dimensions regarding Empowerment, Peccei and Rosenthal's (1997) research showed that subjects agreed Supervisory Support ( $\bar{X}$ = 3.33) and job autonomy ( $\bar{X}$ = 3.73) were important to empower employees to engage in commitment to customer service. The low score for Job Routinization ( $\bar{X}$ = 2.98) show that subjects were also undecided or impartial as to the empowerment of job routinization to engage in commitment to customer service.



With reference to the resource availability dimensions, Peccei and Rosenthal's (1997) research identified that subjects agreed that job pressure ( $\bar{X}$ = 3.58) was an important variable of resource availability. However, subjects did not consider Resource adequacy ( $\bar{X}$ = 2.43) to be a significant variable of resource adequacy.

The organisation aims to develop the employees' knowledge and competence by means of the employer of choice campaign.

As part of the employer of choice campaign the organisation has focused on learning and development and a number of training initiatives and specific service deliverables which were aimed at developing competencies prescribed in job profiles. Thus, aiming to increase job competence and job satisfaction and commitment (Singh, 1998).

In summary, a clear understanding of customer service performance requirements and a strong sense of job competence can be expected to increase individuals' confidence and ability to provide high quality service and to experiment and learn on the job in spirit of continuous improvements (Peccei & Rosenthal, 1997; Singh, 1998).

Of the variables related to the Empowerment dimension, subjects agree that job autonomy ( $\bar{X}$ = 3.82) and supervisor support ( $\bar{X}$  = 3.58) are necessary to engage in customer improvements.

These findings supports research conducted by Susskind et al. (2003), which suggest, that employees perceiving high levels of standards for service delivery indicate a strong presence of supervisor support, which was then related to their perception of customer orientation. In the Susskind et al. (2003) model of customer service process and organisational outcomes, supervisor support was shown to be a mediator of the relationship between standards for service and customer orientation,

indicating that the mere existence of standards is no guarantee that standards will be effectuated at the line level. It is the support and guidance based on those standards that will most likely lead to a customer orientation.

The research findings in terms of the second empowerment variable, job autonomy reconfirms the Hackman and Oldham (1980) Job Characteristics Model, which states that job autonomy elicits the psychological state of experienced responsibility which in turn enhance internal motivation and commitment.

Our findings are supported by Peccei & Rosenthal (2001) who found that employees who felt they had the freedom to make their own decisions at work, to be more likely to be committed to customer service.

As part of the organisation's focus on empowerment, the organisation has introduced the leadership campaign. The campaign was designed to ensure that employees operate at an appropriate level of work, i.e. operational, technical, or tactical. Thus, ensuring employees had adequate support.

Subjects were undecided or impartial whether job routinisation ( $\bar{X} = 2.57$ ) is necessary to engage in customer improvements. Research indicates that a boring and monotonous job stifles motivation to perform well, whereas a challenging job enhances motivation (Kreitner, Kinicki, & Buelens, 1999).

The results may be skewed by the fact that the retail industry is dynamic and fluctuating. Subjects are not exposed to truly routine jobs, which involve standardised repetitive tasks subject to close supervision severely limiting the scope for employees to exercise their initiative and judgement when dealing with customers.

Finally, of the variables related to the third dimension, Resource Availability, subjects showed a slight agreement that job pressure ( $\bar{X} = 3.24$ ) is necessary to engage in customer improvements.

Subjects were undecided or impartial as to the necessity of Resource Adequacy ( $\bar{X}$ = 2.89) to engage in customer improvements.

The significance of Job pressure and resource adequacy is supportive to research conducted by Demeroute et al (2001). Demeroute's et al (2001) Job Demand - Resources model of burnout indicates that when job pressure is high employees' experience exhaustion, thus, resulting in stress which produces harmful physiological outcomes as it is negatively related to job satisfaction, organisational commitment and performance. This is further supported by Paulin, Ferguson and Bergeron's (2006) research showing that when jobs and workplace conditions are intrinsically motivating, supportive and equitable, they create overall job satisfaction and affective commitment, which in turn results in commitment to customer service.

## **6.5 Hypothesis**

### 6.5.1 Hypothesis 1

There is a relationship between the capacity variables (employee knowledge and competence, empowerment, and resource availability) and commitment to customer service.

The results indicate that there is a significant relationship between understanding of customer service and commitment to customer service ( $r= 0.28$ ). This indicates that subjects who understand customer service are committed to customer service.

The significant relationship between understanding customer service and commitment to customer service corresponds with research conducted by Peccei & Rosenthal (1997, 2001).

This supporting literature confirms that the understanding of customer service results in commitment to customer service.

This finding has important human resource policy implications for the organisation. Specifically policies which enhance employee understanding of customer service, such as policies which enhance employees normative and altruistic orientation to customer service, can have a significant positive influence on commitment to customer service. Policies of particular consideration would be practices relating to recruitment, selection, induction and socialisation of new employees into the organisation, to job and customer care training, to employee development more generally, and to employee communication.

There was no significant relationship between job competence and commitment to customer service ( $r= 0.26$ ). This result indicates that job competence is associated with commitment to customer service but the relationship is not significant. This result is surprising, as one would expect that subjects who have the necessary skills and training to do the job would be committed to customer service.

The outcome differs to that of Peccei and Rosenthal (1997). Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) identified a significant relationship between job competence and commitment to customer service.

There possible explanation of the non-significant relationship between job competence and commitment to customer service is the individual employee's definition of and understanding of their positions. Sandberg's (2000) argues that the rationalist approach defines competence in indirect terms, i.e. the descriptions do not indicate whether the employee uses these attributes. Thus, to determine if job competence is significantly related to commitment to customer service one should discover the employees' definition and understanding of their jobs.

The results regarding Empowerment indicated that there was a significant relationship between i.e. supervisor support and commitment to customer service ( $r: 0.27$ ). The results point out that subjects who receive more work related support from supervisors show greater commitment to customer service.

This finding differs to the result of Peccei and Rosenthal's (1997) research, in that the relationship was found to be non-significant between supervisory support and commitment to customer service. A possible explanation for the surprising non-significance would be that supervisory support would have an impact on commitment to customer service only in combination with other variables in the model, such as resource adequacy.

The significant findings of this research with regards to supervisor support are supported by research conducted by Rodes et al. (2001), Peccei & Rosenthal (2001), and Susskind et al (2003).

Rodes et al. (2001) found that employees' reciprocate favourable treatment with greater commitment and performance. Peccei & Rosenthal found that supervisor support had a significant positive impact on employees' commitment to customer service. Susskind et al. (2003) reported that when service providers receive support from their superiors while performing their duties, they display a stronger commitment to the service process.

The results showed no relationship between job autonomy and commitment to customer service ( $r= 0.12$ ). The results indicate that job autonomy is not directly associated with commitment to customer service. These findings concur with that of Peccei and Rosenthal (1997). Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) did not identify a significant relationship between job autonomy and commitment to customer service.

This variable should not be disregarded as research indicated a functional relationship between job autonomy, job satisfaction and commitment (Singh, 1989); and job autonomy, empowerment and commitment to customer service (Peccei & Rosenthal, 2001).

The lack of significance could be due to the fact that a large portion (62.3%) of the respondents were sales associates. The job profile does not afford a great deal of experienced autonomy.

There was no relationship between job routinisation and commitment to customer service ( $r = 0.26$ ). The results indicate that job routinisation is not associated with commitment to customer service. This finding differs to the result of Peccei and Rosenthal's (1997) research. Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) confirmed job routinisation as an important (negative) antecedent of commitment to customer service.

Total quality management literature suggests that narrowly defined jobs severely limit the scope for employees to exercise their initiative and judgement when dealing with customers (Hill, 1991).

A probable explanation for the non-significant relationship could be, as mentioned above the dynamism of the retail industry does not expose employees to routine jobs. Accordingly, it is surprising that the results showed the relationship to be non-significant .

Finally, the results for resource availability indicate no significant relationship between resource adequacy ( $r = 0.21$ ) and job pressure ( $r = 0.07$ ) and commitment to customer service. The results indicate that resource availability is not associated with commitment to customer service.

Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) found resource adequacy to not be significantly related to commitment to customer service, while job pressure emerged as a strong predictor of commitment to customer service.

Job pressure was found to have a positively significant relationship to commitment to customer service rather than a significantly negative relationship.

A potential explanation for the positive relationship is that commitment to customer service implies and involves an intensification of work for the employee, in the form of self exploitation. That is in order to satisfy customer requirements, employees may have to do more than the job requirement.

Demeouti et al. (2001), job demand - resources model assumes that burn out develops when job demands (job pressure) is high and when job resources (resource availability) is limited because such negative working conditions lead to energy depletion and undermine employees' motivation, respectively.

This is further supported by Paulin, Ferguson and Bergeron's (2006) research showing that when jobs and workplace conditions are intrinsically motivating, supportive and equitable, they create overall job satisfaction and affective commitment, which in turn results in commitment to customer service.

Peccei and Rosenthal (1997), found a significant positive relationship between job pressure and commitment to customer service. Thus, suggesting a tendency for a more pressurised job to be associated with higher levels of commitment to customer service. The resource adequacy variable was not found to be related to commitment to customer service.

### 6.5.2 Hypothesis 2

There is a relationship between the willingness variables (affective, normative, calculative, and altruistic commitment) and commitment to customer service

The results indicate that Affective orientation ( $r= 0.43$ ), Normative orientation ( $r= 0.58$ ), calculative orientation ( $r= 0.52$ ) and Altruistic orientation ( $r= 0.53$ ) were all positively and significantly related to commitment to customer service.

The results confirm that affective orientation, normative orientation, calculative orientation and altruistic orientation to customer service has a influence on an employees' inclination to engage in continuous improvement and exert effort on the job on behalf of the customer.

Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) identified in their research that affective, altruistic, and normative orientation was found to have a positive significant relationship with commitment to customer service. The results indicated that affective orientation was the single most important predictor in the model. Employees' strength of calculative orientation was not found to be significant predictor of commitment to customer service. A possible explanation for the unexpected non-significant result obtained for the calculative orientation would be the non-existence of direct financial incentives and the poor visibility of non financial rewards (recognition) for customer service performance within the organisation.

However, it is worth noting that in the current study, normative and altruistic orientation tended to be more pronounced followed by calculative orientation. Affective orientation appeared to be least preferred amongst the subjects.

Consequently, employees' commitment to customer service is primarily motivated by the internalisation of appropriate service values and norms and for the benefit of the organisation itself (Mowday et al., 1982). Employees try to do their best by customers out of a strong sense of attachment and identification with the organisation, and, internalised sense of duty towards them, because they feel a moral obligation to do so and think they ought to (Peccei & Rosenthal, 1997).



The strong preference toward normative and altruistic orientation could be largely contributed to the fact that 49.1% of the respondents are employed for a period of 9 years or more and the organisation's social practices stress responsibility and loyalty to customer service Guest and Hogue (1994).

### 6.5.3 Hypothesis 3

There is a statistically significant difference in commitment to customer service among the respective biographical variables.

The results indicate that there is a statistically significant difference in commitment to customer service among the biographical variables work status, gender & race. The results showed that work status, gender and race emerged as significant predictors of commitment to customer service.

Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) found no significance difference in commitment to customer service among the biographical variables work status and gender. The variable race was not a factor that was considered.

The results demonstrate that on the whole both groups (permanent and casual) are committed to customer service, permanent employees displayed a stronger commitment ( $\bar{X}$ = 4.47) compared to casual employees ( $\bar{X}$  = 4.20).

The variance in commitment between the groups could be due to the fact that part time employees are not subjected to the same HRM practices in terms of supervisor support, training and development, and performance feedback. The research clearly indicated that understanding of customer service, job competencies and supervisor support were positively related to commitment to customer service and that employees who had an understanding of customer service and job competencies, and who had positive supervisory support were more inclined to be committed to customer service.

The results revealed that both male and female employees are committed to customer service. There was however, a stronger significance among male employees ( $\bar{X} = 4.57$ ) than female employees ( $\bar{X} = 4.16$ ).

The results indicated that all race groups are committed to customer service. However, the results showed that white group ( $\bar{X} = 4.6$ ) displayed the strongest commitment to customer service followed by the coloured ( $\bar{X} = 4.44$ ) and asian group ( $\bar{X} = 4.45$ ) and black group ( $\bar{X} = 3.85$ ).

The results indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in commitment to customer service among the biographical variables tenure and age. The results showed that tenure and age were not significant predictors of commitment to customer service.

Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) identified a statistically significant difference in commitment to customer service among the biographical variable age. There was, however, no significant difference in commitment to customer service and the biographical variable tenure.

#### 6.5.4 Hypothesis 4

There is a significant difference in the willingness variables (affective, normative, calculative, and altruistic commitment) among the biographical variables.

The results indicate that there is a significant difference among willingness variable (affective, normative, calculative, and altruistic commitment) in terms of the biographical variable Gender.

Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) found a significant difference among willingness variable (affective commitment) in terms of gender.

The results of the current study revealed that there was a significantly stronger relationship between male employees than female employees in terms of their affective, normative, altruistic and calculative customer service orientation.

On the whole affective orientation ( $\bar{X}$ = 4.72), normative orientation ( $\bar{X}$ = 4.70), and altruistic orientation ( $\bar{X}$ = 4.23) to customer service was significantly more pronounced on male employees than calculative orientation ( $\bar{X}$ = 2.67) to customer service; and, affective orientation ( $\bar{X}$ = 4.35), normative orientation ( $\bar{X}$ = 4.42) to customer service was significantly more pronounced on female employees than calculative orientation ( $\bar{X}$ = 1.59) and altruistic orientation ( $\bar{X}$  = 3.60) to customer service.

The results demonstrated that there was no significant difference among the willingness variable (affective, normative, calculative, and altruistic commitment) in terms of the biographical variable age.

However Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) identified a significant difference among willingness variable (affective, normative, calculative, and altruistic commitment) in terms of the biographical variable age.

The results demonstrated that there was no significant difference among the willingness variable (affective, normative, calculative, and altruistic commitment) in terms of the biographical variable tenure.

Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) found a no significant difference among willingness variable (affective, normative, calculative, and altruistic commitment) in terms of the biographical variable tenure.

The results demonstrated that there was no significant difference among the willingness variable (affective, normative, calculative, and altruistic commitment) in terms of the biographical variable work status.

Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) identified a significant difference among willingness variable (affective, and altruistic commitment) in terms of the biographical variable work status.

#### 6.5.5 Hypothesis 5

There is a significant difference in the capacity variables (employee knowledge and competence, empowerment, and resource availability) among the biographical variables.

The results indicated that there is a significant difference between supervisor support and the biographical variables work status. There was no significance between understanding of customer service, job competence, job autonomy, job routinization, job pressure, and resource adequacy and work status.

The results revealed that there is a stronger significant relationship among permanent employees ( $\bar{X}= 3.79$ ) than casual employees ( $\bar{X}= 3.21$ ) and the capacity variable supervisor support. Permanent employees consider supervisory support to be more important than casual employees.

Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) found a significant difference between the capacity variables job pressure, job routinisation, and job autonomy. There was no significant difference between the capacity variables understanding of customer service, job competence, supervisory support, resource adequacy and the biographical variable work status.

The results indicated that there is a significant difference between supervisor support and the biographical variables and gender. There was no significance between understanding of customer service, job competence, job autonomy, job routinization, job pressure, and resource adequacy and gender.

The results revealed that there is a stronger significant relationship among male employees ( $\bar{X}$ = 3.85) than female employees ( $\bar{X}$ = 3.3077) and capacity variable supervisor support.

There was no significance between understanding of customer service, job competence, supervisor support, job autonomy, job routinization, job pressure, and resource adequacy and race.

There was no significance between understanding of customer service, job competence, supervisor support, job autonomy, job routinization, job pressure, and resource adequacy and tenure.

Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) found a significant difference between the capacity variables understanding of customer service, and job routinisation. There was no significant difference between the capacity variables job pressure, job competence, job autonomy, supervisory support, resource adequacy and the biographical variable tenure.

The results indicated that there is a significant relationship between the capacity variable job autonomy and the biographical variable age. There was no significance between understanding of customer service, job competence, supervisor support, job routinization, job pressure, and resource adequacy and age.

The results revealed that there is a stronger significant relationship among the age groups 29-38 ( $\bar{X}$ = 4.27), and 39-48 ( $\bar{X}$  = 3.90) and job autonomy.

Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) found a significant difference between the capacity variables understanding of customer service, job pressure, and job autonomy. There was no significant difference between the capacity variables job routinisation, job competence, supervisory support, resource adequacy and the biographical variable age.

### 6.5.6 Hypothesis 6

There is a significant relationship between the capacity variables (employee knowledge and competence, empowerment, and resource availability) and the willingness variables (affective, normative, calculative, and altruistic commitment).

The results indicate that there is a significant relationship between understanding of customer service and altruistic orientation ( $r= 0.39$ ) to customer service. There was no significant relationship between understanding of customer service and normative orientation ( $r= 0.32$ ), affective orientation and calculative orientation to customer service.

This indicates that subjects who understand customer service are normatively or altruistically committed to customer service. This finding has significant human resource policy implications for the organisation, suggesting that, policies and practices relating to recruitment, selection, induction and socialisation of new employees into the organisation, to job and customer care training, to employee development more generally, and to employee communication can have significant influence in enhancing employees' normative and altruistic orientation to customer service.

Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) found a significant relationship between understanding of customer service and normative orientation, affective orientation, altruistic orientation, and calculative orientation.

The results indicate that there is a significant relationship between job competence ( $r= 0.41$ ) and altruistic orientation to customer service. There was no significant relationship between job competence and normative orientation, affective orientation and calculative orientation to customer service.

This indicates that subjects who are competent in their jobs are altruistically committed to customer service. Thus, based on the fact that employees that are altruistically orientated to commitment to customer service are motivated by their strong sense of attachment and identification with the organisation (Matheiu & Zajac, 1990), the organisation should place emphasise on service quality and service value. This could be achieved by strengthening and making more visible the rewards and recognition programmes relating to customer service performance.

Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) found a significant relationship between job competence and normative orientation, affective orientation, altruistic orientation, and calculative orientation.

The results indicate that there is a significant relationship between supervisor support and calculative orientation ( $r= 0.44$ ) and altruistic orientation ( $r= 0.66$ ) to customer service. There was no significant relationship between supervisor support and affective orientation and normative orientation to customer service.

This indicates that subjects with positive supervisor support are calculative or altruistically committed to customer service. These findings have significant impact on human resource policies and practice in terms of reward and recognition. This could be achieved by strengthening and making more visible the rewards and recognition programmes relating to customer service performance.

Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) found a significant relationship between supervisory support and normative orientation, affective orientation, altruistic orientation, and calculative orientation.

There was no significant relationship between job competence and normative orientation, altruistic orientation to customer service, affective orientation and calculative orientation to customer service.

This indicates that subjects who had autonomic jobs are altruistically committed to customer service. Therefore, considering the studies that employees that are altruistically orientated to commitment to customer service are motivated by their strong sense of attachment and identification with the organisation (Matheiu & Zajac, 1990), the organisation should place emphasise on service quality and service value. This could be achieved by strengthening and making more visible the rewards and recognition programmes relating to customer service performance.

Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) found a significant relationship between job autonomy and normative orientation, affective orientation, altruistic orientation, and calculative orientation.

The results indicate that there is a significant negative relationship between job routinisation and normative orientation ( $r= 0.29$ ) and altruistic orientation ( $r= 0.32$ ) to customer service. There was no significant relationship between understanding of customer service and affective orientation and calculative orientation to customer service.

This indicates that subjects who have less routine jobs are normatively or altruistically committed to customer service. This finding has significant human resource policy implications for the organisation, suggesting that, policies and practices relating to recruitment, selection, induction and socialisation of new employees into the organisation, to job and customer care training, to employee development more generally, and to employee communication can have significant influence in enhancing employees' normative and altruistic orientation to customer service.



Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) found a significant relationship between job routinisation and normative orientation, affective orientation, altruistic orientation, and calculative orientation.

The results indicated that there was no significant relationship between both, resource adequacy and job pressure and normative orientation, affective orientation, altruistic orientation, and calculative orientation.

Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) found a significant relationship between both resource adequacy and job pressure and altruistic orientation, and calculative orientation. There was no significant difference between both resource adequacy and job pressure and normative orientation and affective orientation.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

Overall Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) general model of commitment to customer service has shown to provide a useful basis for explaining variations in levels of employees' commitment to customer service. Some of the specific links hypothesised in the model failed to find confirmation in the data. In general though, the results of the analysis provided good support for the model with a number of both willingness and capacity variables emerging as strong predictors of commitment to customer service.

Based on the findings and above discussions, recommendations are presented in the following chapter.

## Chapter 7

### Conclusion and recommendations

#### **7.1 Introduction**

An outstanding way for retailers to differentiate is to adopt a service oriented business strategy. The desire to create superior value for customers and sustainable competitive advantage drives a business to create and maintain the culture that will produce the necessary behaviours. The aim of the study is to understand the drivers and motivators of the individual behaviour with regards to employee to commitment to customer service.

The result of the research has important human resource policy implication for organisations. The following suggests recommendations in terms of improving employee commitment to customer service and recommendations for future research.

#### **7.2 Conclusions**

The findings of the research in terms of the specific objectives were as follows;

##### 7.2.1 Objective 1

To determine the extent to which employees are committed to customer service

The research indicated that the sample of South African employees within a Fast moving consumer group expressed a strong commitment to customer service ( $\bar{X}=4.371$ ).

### 7.2.2 Objective 2

To ascertain the extent to which employees are willing to engage in customer service

In terms of the willingness of employees to exert themselves on behalf of customers, the staff expressed strong Normative ( $\bar{X}$ = 4.57), Affective ( $\bar{X}$ = 4.54), and Altruistic ( $\bar{X}$ = 3.92) customer service orientation, and a weak Calculative ( $\bar{X}$ = 2.14) customer service orientation.

### 7.2.3 Objective 3

To specify the capacity of employees to engage in customer service

The Mean scores listed in Table 5.3 (p59) show that subject agree that understanding of customer service ( $\bar{X}$ = 4.45) and job competence ( $\bar{X}$ = 4.23) are important dimensions of Knowledge and Competence that is required to engage in commitment to customer service.

The agreement relating to Supervisory support ( $m$ = 3.59) and job autonomy ( $\bar{X}$ = 3.82) show that these dimensions empower employees to engage in commitment to customer service. The low score for Job Routinization ( $\bar{X}$ = 2.57) show that subjects are undecided as to the empowerment of job routinization to engage in commitment to customer service.

The low scores for Resource adequacy ( $\bar{X}$ = 2.89) and job pressure ( $\bar{X}$ = 3.24) show that subjects are also undecided that the dimensions of resource availability engages employees to be committed to customer service.

### 7.2.4 Objective 4

To examine the relationship between the willingness variables and the capacity variables and commitment to customer service respectively.

The results indicate that there is a significant relationship between understanding of customer service and commitment to customer service ( $r= 0.28$ ). This indicates that subjects who understand customer service are committed to customer service.

There was no significant relationship between job competence and commitment to customer service ( $r= 0.264$ ). This result indicate that job competence is not associated with commitment to customer service.

This result is surprising, as one would expect that subjects who have the necessary skills and training to do the job would be committed to customer service.

The outcome regarding Empowerment indicated that there was a significant relationship between i.e. supervisor support and commitment to customer service ( $r= 0.27$ ). The results point out that subjects who receive more work related support form supervisors show greater commitment to customer service.

The findings of the research showed no relationship between job autonomy and commitment to customer service ( $r= 0.12$ ). The results indicate that job autonomy is not directly associated with commitment to customer service.

There was no relationship between job routinisation and commitment to customer service ( $r= 0.26$ ). The results indicate that job routinisation is not associated with commitment to customer service.

The results for resource availability indicate no significant relationship between resource adequacy ( $r= 0.21$ ) and job pressure ( $r= 0.07$ ) and commitment to customer service. The results indicate that resource availability is not associated with commitment to customer service.

The results indicate that Affective orientation ( $r= 0.428$ ), Normative orientation ( $r= 0.579$ ), Calculative orientation ( $r= 0.518$ ) and Altruistic orientation ( $r= 0.533$ ) were all positively and significantly related to commitment to customer service.

The findings confirm that affective orientation, normative orientation, calculative orientation and altruistic orientation to customer service has an influence on an employees' inclination to engage in continuous improvement and exert effort on the job on behalf of the customer.

#### 7.2.5 Objective 5

To determine the relationship between the willingness variables and the capacity variables

The research indicates that there is a significant relationship between understanding of customer service and altruistic orientation ( $r= 0.39$ ) to customer service. There was no significant relationship between understanding of customer service and normative orientation, affective orientation and calculative orientation to customer service. This indicates that subjects who understand customer service are normatively or altruistically committed to customer service.

The results shows that there is a significant relationship between job competence ( $r= 0.41$ ) and altruistic orientation to customer service. There was no significant relationship between job competence and normative orientation, affective orientation and calculative orientation to customer service. Thus, indicating that subjects who are competent in their jobs are altruistically committed to customer service.

The results indicate that there is a significant relationship between supervisor support and calculative orientation ( $r= 0.44$ ) and altruistic orientation ( $r= 0.66$ ) to customer service.

There was no significant relationship between supervisor support and affective orientation and normative orientation to customer service. This indicates that subjects with positive supervisor support are calculative or altruistically committed to customer service.

There was no significant relationship between job competence and normative orientation, altruistic orientation to customer service, affective orientation and calculative orientation to customer service. This indicates that subjects who had autonomic jobs are altruistically committed to customer service.

The results indicate that there is a significant negative relationship between job routinisation and normative orientation ( $r= 0.29$ ) and altruistic orientation ( $r= 0.32$ ) to customer service. There was no significant relationship between understanding of customer service and affective orientation and calculative orientation to customer service. This indicates that subjects who have less routine jobs are normatively or altruistically committed to customer service.

The findings show that there was no significant relationship between both, resource adequacy and job pressure and normative orientation, affective orientation, altruistic orientation, and calculative orientation.

#### 7.2.6 Objective 6

To examine the influence of the biographic variables and commitment to customer service.

The results indicate that there is a statistically significant difference in commitment to customer service among the biographical variables work status, gender & race. The results showed that work status, gender and race emerged as significant predictors of commitment to customer service.

The results demonstrate that on the whole both groups (permanent and casual) are committed to customer service, permanent employees displayed a stronger commitment ( $\bar{X}$ = 4.47) compared to casual employees ( $\bar{X}$ = 4.20).

The results revealed that both male and female employees are committed to customer service. There was however a stronger significance among male employees ( $\bar{X}$ =4.57) than female employees ( $\bar{X}$ = 4.16).

The research shows that all race groups are committed to customer service. However, the results showed that white group ( $\bar{X}$ = 4.6) displayed the strongest commitment to customer service followed by the coloured ( $\bar{X}$ = 4.44) and Asian group ( $\bar{X}$ = 4.45) and black group ( $\bar{X}$ = 3.85).

The results indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in commitment to customer service among the biographical variables tenure and age. The results showed that tenure and age were not significant predictors of commitment to customer service.

### **7.3 Recommendations**

The following recommendations are based on the finding of this research.

#### **7.3.1 Recommendations to the Organisation**

To ensure that employees maintain a strong commitment to customer service the organisation must ensure a strong psychological bond linking the individual to the organisation. That is, the organisation should maintain and enhances the individual employees' Normative, Affective and Altruistic customer orientation. In addition to the employer of choice campaign the organisation should re-launch the organisations corporate values of people and service. This could be reinforced by means of a road show and employee competitions, such as encouraging employees to either design murals or write songs linking the values.

In addition, the organisation should re-launch the leadership campaign, encouraging management to drive talent management and development and succession planning. Human resource management practices, with reference to recruitment should be structured such as to encourage internal placement, focused on employment equity.

The introduction of these practices and policies would be expected to improve supervisory support, increase job competencies, job autonomy, increase job opportunities and improve career satisfaction, which would in turn improve customer service orientation among employees.

By focusing on employment equity the organisation would aim to motivate and improve relations among previously disadvantaged employees, such as female employees, thus increasing career satisfaction and improving customer service orientation among female employees.

It is further recommended that the organisation focus on developing social support. This could be achieved by focusing on team building, and, approval and recognition programmes. Managers and supervisors should publicly recognise employees for their accomplishments in customer service. The organisation should dedicate a section in the monthly newsletter to recognise employees' excellence toward service delivery.

The research indicated that employees deemed understanding of customer service, job competence, and supervisor support as significant contributors to employees' capacity to engage in continuous improvement. Suggesting that, policies that enhance employee competence and understanding of customer service like policies focusing on learning and development, goal setting and performance management would enabling the organisation to create an environment in which employees would be able to develop to their full potential.



Thus strengthen employees understanding of customer service performance requirements and a sense of job competence, thereby, increasing the employees' circle of influence and confidence and abilities to provide high quality service and to experiment and learn on the job in a spirit of continuous improvement.

In-keeping with the Self-efficacy belief employees will experience feelings of competence and confidence and would find the tasks to be more enjoyable and would strengthen commitment to customer service.

As employees valued supervisor support as a significant contributor to their capacity to engage in continuous improvement, HRM policies and practices such as the leadership development programmes, and talent management programmes should be driven with more significance.

There are also significant HRM implications in terms of job design. Suggesting that supervisors should be coaches and or mentors operating on a more transactional level, whereas employees not in managerial positions should be operating on a more operational level i.e. allowing greater cognitive control.

This would create an environment that would afford high quality leader-member exchange thus strengthening employees' affective orientation and gaining commitment to customer service.

### 7.3.2 Recommendations for future research

The model should be tested in other service contexts to test the robustness of the findings and to recognize additional determinants of commitment to customer service.

To authenticate the findings of this research, the model should be tested on a larger sample representative of the population.

The reliability of the questionnaire as a scale for measuring commitment to customers service across different cultures is questionable, as this model was developed in a western environment, and due to the cultural differences in South Africa, it is likely that cultural factors will influence its applicability. Cultural influences should be considered and tested as a capacity variable.

Focus group discussions could assist in reformulating the questionnaire. Adopting triangulation by interviews could assist candidates in responding to the survey.

#### ***7.4 Conclusion***

In this research we have identified potentially important antecedents of employee commitment to customer service. The specific variables which were ultimately identified as having a significant impact on commitment to customer service focus attention to a range of human resource policies and practices relevant to enhancing this key aspect of employee performance in service organisations. Specific policy linkages and practices were only hinted at.

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## Annexure

### Customer Service Questionnaire: Section 1

#### Demographic Information:

Age

1 18-28	2. 29-38	3. 39-48	4.49-58	5. Over 59
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Sex

1. Male	2. Female
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Race:

1. Black	2. White	3. Coloured	4. Asian	5. other
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Position:

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Work status:

1. Full time	2. Part time
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Period of Employment:

1. 0-2yrs	2. 3-4yrs	3. 5-6yrs	4. 7-8yrs	5. over 9yrs
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Please answer all the following questions by filling in the rating most appropriate to your work environment. Only enter 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 under the rating column. The rating scale is as follows:

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neither agree nor disagree

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly agree

Thank you for your participation.

#### Section 2.1

Statement	Rating
1. I am always working to improve the quality of service I give to customers.	
2. I have specific ideas about how to improve the service I give to customers.	
3. I often make suggestions about how to improve customer service in my department.	
4. I put a lot of effort into my job to try to satisfy customers.	
5. No matter how I feel , I always put myself out for every customer I serve.	
6. I often go out of my way to help customers.	

### Section 2.2.a

Statement	Rating
7. I believe that I must understand the needs of my company's customers	
8. I believe that it is critical to provide value to my company's customers	
9. I believe that I know my company's customers	
10. I believe that I am primarily interested in satisfying my company's customers	
11. I believe that understanding my company's competitors is important to doing my job	
12. I believe that I know the difference between my company's products/services and its competitor's products/service	
13. I believe that I must understand who buys my company's products/services	
14. I believe that I understand how my company's products / services are sold	
15. I believe that we take corrective action immediately to make customers happy	
16. I believe that the departments here work together to meet customer specifications	
17. I believe that I can perform my job better if I understand the needs of my company's customers	
18. I believe that my company exists primarily to serve its customers	
19. I believe that understanding my company's customers will help me do my job better	
20. I believe that the more I know the marketplace, the more I understand what's going on in the company	
21. I believe that my work affects customer satisfaction of my company' customers	
22. I believe that the success of my company is largely determined by its ability to satisfy its customers	

### Section 2.2.b

23. I believe that my work group must cooperate with other work groups to satisfy customers	
24. I believe that companies would perform a lot better if employees communicated more	
25. I believe that all employees need to understand how their job fits into the overall operation	
26. I believe that employees who receive my work are my customers	
27. I believe that it is important to understand the needs of employees who receive my work	

Statement	Rating
28.I believe that employees could do their job better if feedback was given more often	
29.I believe that meeting the needs of employees who receive my work is critical to doing my job	
30.I believe that it is important receive feedback from employees who receive my work	
31.I believe that it is important to understand what is expected of me by employees who receive my work	
32.I believe that I ensure that employees who depend on my work output communicate with me	
33.I believe that a process exists to help me understand what is expected from my work output	
34.I believe that it is important to satisfy employees who receive my work	
35.I believe that I value feedback from employees who receive work output	
36.I believe that I would change my job task to help other employees do their job better	
37.I believe that I focus on the requirements of the person who receives my work	

### Section 3.1

38.I really enjoy dealing with customers.	
39.I get a lot of satisfaction from giving good service to customers.	

### Section 3.2

40.In doing their job, staff should always have the customers' best interest in mind.	
41.Customers have a right to expect superior treatment from all staff.	

### Section 3.3.a

42.In this company you get a lot of recognition if you give good service to customers.	
43.In this company nobody really notices whether or not you give good service to customers.	

### Section 3.3b

44.Senior management in this store is sincere in tis attempts to meet the employees' point of view	
45.Senior management in this store would be quite prepared to gain advantage by deceiving employees.	

Statement	Rating
46. I feel quite confident that management in this store will always try to treat me fairly.	
47. I feel quite confident the my immediate boss will always try to treat me fairly.	
48. If I have problems at work I know my immediate boss will try to help.	
49. I can rely on my immediate boss to do his/her best by me.	

### Section 3.4.a

50. I am proud to be able to tell people that I work for this company.	
51. I feel myself to be a part of the company.	
52. I would recommend a close friend to join the company.	
53. I am willing to put myself out to help the company.	
54. In my work I like to feel I am making some effort, not just for myself but for the company as well.	
55. To know that my own work had make a contribution to the good of the company would please me.	

### Section 3.4.b

56. In this store there is a strong commitment to first class service.	
57. In the company good customer service is given a high priority.	
58. Management in this store is genuinely committed to first class service.	
59. Senior management at the store set a personal example of good customer service in his/her daily job.	
60. My immediate supervisor is genuinely committed to first class service.	
61. My immediate supervisor sets a personal example of good customer service to customers.	
62. My immediate supervisor puts a lot of emphasis on giving good service to customers.	
63. Most of my co-workers are genuinely committed to first class service	
64. Most of my co-workers are genuinely committed to giving good service to customers.	

### Section 3.5

65. I feel I have a good understanding of what first class service is all about.	
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### Section 3.6.a

Statement	Rating
66. I have had enough training to do my job well.	
67. I know how to deal with most problems in my job.	
68. I am always comfortable dealing with customers.	

### Section 3.6.b

69. My immediate boss supports me in getting my job done.	
70. My immediate boss praises me when I do a good job.	
71. My immediate boss encourages me to speak up when I disagree with a decision.	

### Section 3.6.c

72. I use my personal judgement in carrying out my job.	
73. I have the freedom to decide what I do on my job.	
74. I can make my own decision in carrying out my job.	

### Section 3.6.d

75. My job has variety.	
76. My job is repetitive.	
77. I have the opportunity to do a number of different things on my job.	

### Section 3.6.e

78. In my department there are not enough people to enable us to do the job well.	
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### Section 3.6.f

79. I have to work very fast on my job.	
80. I am often under a lot of pressure in my job.	
81. My workload is too heavy.	